Football World Cup qualifier European Group Two: Moldova 0 England 3

Hoddle's England roll over Moldova

David Lacey in Kishinev

AT LEAST England are on their way. Glenn Hoddle's term of office might have begun a trifle nervously in the Republican Stadium here on Sunday, as his team worked out the new coach's plan of action, but England's scoring habits of Euro 96 did not desert them.

Moldova, clever going forward but defensively naive, were beaten comfortably enough as England stole a late summer's march on their World Cup rivals. Two quick goals in the first half, from Nick Barmby and Paul Gascoigne, gave England an unshakeable grip and a third just past the hour from Alan Shearer, the nation's 100th captain, confirmed their mounting superiority.

Matthew Le Tissier made a brief entrance in this quiet, leafy glade in the hinterland of world football, coming on near the end of a warm evening's work which ended with an echo of the European Championship as the opposition missed a penalty.

Still, something will have to be done at the back before England encounter Poland, Georgia and Italy. Lacking the authority of Tony Adams, Hoddle's remodelled defence looked ill at ease until Paul Ince gained a grip of the midfield and set up a base for England's attacks, but England never really appeared sure of themselves when Moldova ran at them with the ball.

Injuries had deprived Hoddle of several regular members of Terry Venables's European Championship side. Seaman, Southgate, Ince, Gascoigne and Shearer were still there but now Gary Neville and the newly capped Andy Hinchcliffe were England's wing-backs whereas Venables had preferred to use forwards in wide positions.

Thus Hoddle wasted no time carrying out his declared intention of basing England on the tactical patterns he had employed at Chelsea. His selection of the 21-year-old David Beckham, the other new cap, also fulfilled his promise to give youth an early chance, and the youngster looked worth another outing.

Yet all plans take time to bed down. Ideally Hoddle would have liked a friendly match before needing to think about the World Cup, and the opening 20 minutes saw his defenders struggling to come to terms with the new script.

Moldova, neat-passing and inventive, wasted no time exploiting the space that opened up as defenders looked at one another in apparent bemusement. Testimitanu, dividing his time between marking Shearer and setting up attacks, was a particular threat on the left.

Fortunately for England, Moldova's finishing was poor. On the quarter-hour Testimitanu lobbed the ball over the defence to leave Miterev and Popovici clear, but first one, then the other saw weak shots palmed down by Seaman.


Expansive gesture . . . Paul Gascoigne makes room for himself to hold off two Moldovan defenders PHOTOGRAPH: RADU SIGHETI

At this stage, with Neville obviously unsure about the wing-backs' role, and Southgate, Pallister and Pearce looking uncomfortable in triplicate, England were heading for a defensive slough. But once they began to gather attacking momentum the vulnerability of the Moldovan defence in the air was soon apparent, and England scored in the 24th and 26th minutes of the first half.

Beckham and Hinchcliffe switched play from left to right and Neville's steep centre dropped behind Shearer to Barmby, whose sharp first-time shot flew low into the near corner of the net.

The simplicity of the goal gave England much encouragement and Moldova considerable angst. Two minutes later Ince waved a boot at Barmby's cross, risking being penalised for raising a foot to the goalkeeper, but the referee allowed the challenge and, after the ball had spun up off Ince's toecap, Gasgoigne nodded it in under the crossbar.

England might have doubled their score by half-time. Testimitanu got away with pulling down Shearer near the penalty spot and then the new captain wafted the ball over the bar after Gascoigne and Barmby had set up a simple opportunity.

Nevertheless Shearer's now habitual goal for England followed in the 61st minute. Southgate and Neville created the opening and, although Secu managed to touch the ball towards his goalkeeper, Shearer was already lunging in to score.

Moldova deserved a consolation goal on effort alone and thought they would get it when Pearce volleyed an intended clearance on to an arm to concede a penalty. This time Seaman was beaten but Testimitanu's kick rebounded from the angle of post and bar.

That more or less completed a quietly satisfactory start for Hoddle, which was slightly spoiled by the yellow card shown to Pearce and Ince for gratuitous fouls in the second half. Cautions can soon catch up with a team in the World Cup and Hoddle will not have wanted to risk losing these players for the tougher tasks ahead.

● In their Group Four match, Scotland could only manage a goalless draw against Austria in Vienna. Meanwhile in Eschen, the Republic of Ireland trounced Liechtenstein 5-0 in Group Eight. The only home nation to lose were Northern Ireland in Group Nine, losing 1-0 to Ukraine.

Wales 6 San Marino 0

Wales cry foul after victory

Martin Thorpe in Cardiff

IN the search for fairness Fifa is in danger of ending up with pointlessness. The obvious desire to see all nations represented in the World Cup had to be questioned on Saturday when a San Marino side who should not be playing at this level decided that instead of learning from a superior side they would teach Wales a lesson in the black arts of fouls, elbows and dives.

As an indirect result Ryan Giggs will now miss Wales's crucial next qualifier at home to Holland, having been booked for applauding a player's theatrical fall when the referee thought the sarcasm was directed at him.

The booking only compounded Wales's sense of injustice. As Dean Saunders put it: "Ryan gets booked for that and the referee's missing waist-high tackles. Someone could have got badly injured. There's obviously a question-mark about playing teams like that."

San Marino's football was so inept that in 90 minutes they did not produce one shot on target, win one corner or force Southall during his 72 minutes on the pitch to take one goal-kick. When the Wales keeper was replaced — presumably because he was in danger of suffering sunstroke — the out-classed part-timers did force two goal-kicks but their one shot anywhere near goal ballooned 3 metres over the bar.

The Marinese displayed all the bad points of Italian football and none of the best. Although the referee issued the visitors with five yellow cards, which included having a man sent off, it was a poor response to their intent.

"When they were 4-0 down they just decided to start kicking," said Saunders. Giggs wisely hid himself away on the left wing and kept his runs to a minimum. Although Giggs should have known better than get involved as he did for his booking, he was still Wales's classiest player and contributed to three goals.

In between Hughes headed the second, the keeper's error let in Robinson for his debut goal, another defensive mistake gifted Hughes the fifth and Wales also hit the woodwork four times.

They now sit atop the Group Seven table, albeit with games against Holland, Turkey and Belgium to come. At least they know that, if they subsequently get kicked off the top of the table, it will only be metaphorically speaking.

Cryptic crossword by Plodge

Across

1 Decided during a trial to be accomplished (13)
10 The girl-friend (perhaps Alma, the Italian one) is back (9)
11 Sounding, in the main, to have given old copper for new jelly (5)
12 After a sideshoot dispensed with Scarface? (5)
13 Turbulent as one Norman state (3, 6)
14 The panpsychist is back in a fog (7)
16 First-footing boss-lady had no right to begin 8 (7)
18 Takes in Roman: he is in a bedsit (7)
20 There's rubbish in the entry throttle (7)
21 Invalid carriage for a healer, you said, with one arm (9)
23 Jog to the first swim on the south coast (5)
24 Said to have let be the small-fry (5)
25 The essential part is to be a reformed, sinless, intransigent (9)
26 Cooling-off process needed if a feminist works in the allotment (13)

Down

2 A narrow escape from frozen earth in Greenland (4, 5)
3 The flower that's said to make noses wrinkle (5)
4 Vans of this type ain't half strong! (7)
5 The constant application of a tourniquet (7)
6 A left-wing teacher lost his head on a carving stone (9)
7 The Medici's brother Filippo sounds saucy! (5)
8 At a drill ordered in Bible on the potter's field (8, 5)
9 The first of 8 reckons to take a metre to change gear (13)
15 Slight article admitted an alternative to double glazing, perhaps (9)
17 Tricky problem to a cook following a Lancashire recipe (3, 6)
19 It's wrong, that Carol should stand outside the pub (7)
20 Comparatively large swallow taken by heads of state (7)
22 Albert Square's deserted, unsettled by thunder (5)
23 In this one may have some perception (5)

Last week's solution

Football results and leading positions

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: First Division: Bradford 1, Tranmere 0; Grimsby 0, Portsmouth 1; Huddersfield 1, Crystal Palace 1; Norwich 1, Wolves 0; Oldham 3, Ipswich 3; Port Vale 2, Oxford 0; QPR 1, Bolton 2; Reading 2, Stoke 2; Southend 1, Swindon 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (played 4, points 10); 2, Stoke (4-10); 3, Barnsley (3-9).

Second Division: Blackpool 0, Wycombe 0; Bournemouth 1, Peterborough 2; Bristol Rovers 1, Stockport 1; Bury 4, Bristol City 0; Crewe 0, Watford 2; Gillingham 0, Chesterfield 1; Luton 1, Rotherham 0; Millwall 2, Burnley 1; Notts County 0, York 1; Shrewsbury 0, Brentford 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Plymouth (4-10); 2, Brentford (4-10); 3, Bury (4-10).

Third Division: Brighton 1, Scunthorpe 1; Cambridge 0, Cardiff 2; Colchester 1, Hereford 1; Doncaster 3, Darlington 2; Fulham 1, Carlisle 0; Hull 0, Barnet 0; Leyton Orient 2, Hartlepool 0; Mansfield 0, Rochdale 0; Scarborough 1, Northampton 1; Torquay 2, Exeter 0; Wigan 4, Chester 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan (4-10); 2, Fulham (4-9); 3, Hull (4-8).

SCOTTISH LEAGUE: First Division: Morton 1, Falkirk 0; Partick 1, St Mirren 1; Stirling Albion 1, Dundee 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Morton (3-6); 2, Dundee (3-5); 3, St Johnstone (2-4).

Second Division: Ayr 6, Berwick 0; Clyde 0, Queen of South 2; Dumbarton 1, Brechin 1; Livingston 1, Hamilton 0; Stenhousemuir 0, Stranraer 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (3-9); 2, Queen of South (3-6); 3, Ayr (3-5).

Third Division: Albion 2, Cowdenbeath 0; Arbroath 0, East Stirling 0; Montrose 2, Ross County 1; Queens Park 1, Forfar 4; Inverness CT 1, Alloa 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Albion (3-9); 2, Forfar (3-6); 3, Cowdenbeath (3-6).

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Saddam's victory humiliates Clinton

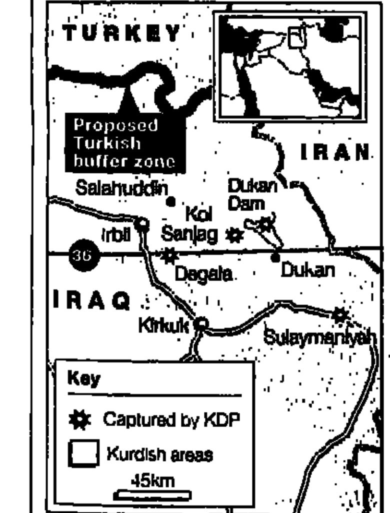
Chris Nuttall in Salahuddin and Ian Black in London

KURDISH forces backed by Iraq took almost total control of Kurdistan on Monday, handing President Saddam Hussein a proxy victory and the West its most serious strategic reverse in the region since the invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

As President Clinton, facing humiliation before November's elections, conceded there was little the United States could do to help, guerrilla fighters of the Baghdad-backed Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) captured the key city of Sulaymaniyah from their longtime rival the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and sent thousands of refugees pouring towards the border with Iran.

The capture of Sulaymaniyah, 45km from the Iranian border and the region's largest city, established effective Iraqi control of 80 per cent of Kurdistan. It spelt an end to the US and British-backed humanitarian Operation Provide Comfort in the northern "safe haven" set up in 1991 after the Gulf war.

The KDP, under the leadership of Massoud Barzani, said in a statement that it controlled the whole of northern Iraq. "The KDP is in control of all the three Kurdish provinces," it said.



Although there were no signs of Iraqi troops or armour involved in the fighting, the swift defeat of the PUK, led by Jalal Talabani, exposed the hollowness of the Western strategy of containing President Saddam, including last week's cruise missile attacks in the south.

The missiles, fired from US naval ships in the Gulf and B-52 bombers on September 3 and 4, hit air defence and command and communications centres in southern Iraq.

As the dust settled, Mr Clinton's biggest difficulty was with his European and Arab allies, many of whom saw his action as driven by the presidential elections.

Only Britain gave the US full military and diplomatic support, with John Major insisting the Iraqi leader had to be punished.

Warren Christopher, the US secretary of state, on a brief European tour, met the French foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, and President Jacques Chirac, but failed to persuade them to overcome their objections.

US and British officials played down the extent of international opposition to the attacks, insisting they flowed from UN resolutions, but the Irish foreign minister, Dick Spring, acknowledged that there were "very different views" among European Union member states.

In Moscow, where the government has been critical of the US attacks, the ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky said Mr Clinton was "worse than Hitler".

This week, with the balance of power radically changed — and Turkey establishing a security zone on its border — Ahmed Chalabi, the executive president of the Western-backed Iraqi opposition, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), warned that Iran might now respond to calls for intervention by the PUK and begin a proxy war.

"This is a victory for Saddam," he said. "He has won a battle but not the war. This means that Saddam is back in effective control of the whole area."

Iraqi opposition forces have been stressing for days the significant presence of Iraqi secret police in Kurdistan, despite the apparent withdrawal of regular Iraqi military forces after the capture of Irbil on August 31.

"Saddam's security forces will now move in after the KDP and there will be a hunt for opposition people," Mr Chalabi said. "The stage is set for a political deal between the KDP and Saddam."

A UN refugee official in Geneva said up to 10,000 people were reported to have fled Sulaymaniyah.

Despite Mr Clinton's promises "to help anybody that needs to be out of Iraq", US officials confirmed that 96 Iraqi defectors and INC supporters were executed in Irbil early last week, apparently on suspicion of links to the CIA.

Le Monde, page 13
Washington Post, page 15

Kurdish fighters with the Baghdad-backed KDP advance on Sulaymaniyah, the last important northern Iraq city, which they captured from the rival PUK on Monday PHOTOGRAPH: JOCHEL FRYCH

Iran appeals for refugee aid

IRAN appealed on Monday for aid to assist Iraqi Kurds fleeing fighting in northern Iraq, and said that almost 200,000 Iraqi refugees were huddled on its borders.

State-run Tehran radio quoted Ahmad Hosseini, Tehran's top official in charge of refugees, as saying Iran would make it possible for countries and international organisations to provide relief in camps in border areas.

Mr Hosseini said Iran had no plans to let refugees in unless their lives were in danger. He said about 30,000 refugees were gathered in border regions of Iran's Kurdistan province, 25,000 were alongside West Azerbaijan province, and 60,000 were at the border in Kermanshah province.

Mr Hosseini said 500,000 Kurds were displaced by inter-Kurdish fighting around Sulaymaniyah and needed food, clothing and heating equipment.

"If world bodies send the needed aid in time we will be able to avoid a human tragedy," he said, adding that Iran was already providing emergency and medical help.

He said that Iran was determined to avoid a repeat of what happened in 1991, when 500,000 refugees, most of them Kurds, fled to Iran when Baghdad crushed Kurdish and Shi'ite Muslim uprisings that erupted after Iraq's defeat in the Gulf war. Most Kurds have since returned to Iraq. — *Reuter, AP*

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400.	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Cyprus tension rises after soldier killed

Chris Drake in Nicosia

A TURKISH Cypriot soldier was killed and another seriously wounded on Sunday after shots were fired next to a section of the British Sovereign Bases Area which separates the feuding communities in Cyprus.

It was immediately feared that it could have been a revenge attack for the killing of two Greek Cypriots last month during demonstrations at Dherynia against the Turkish occupation of the island.

The Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, warned on Monday that the island was heading for catastrophe unless immediate action was taken to reduce the growing tension between the communities.

The shooting occurred near a Turkish guard unit based in the village of Acheritou, which Turks call Guvercinlik.

It is not far from a British military listening post where the 9th Signals Regiment is stationed. A road linking the listening post with the British base at Dhekelia runs through a zone 100m wide which forms a narrow intercommunal dividing line.

The strip is part of British Sovereign Bases Area (SBA) territory, but does not come under United Nations control like most of the buffer zone, and is patrolled by Greek and Turkish Cypriot police working for the British.

An SBA statement said preliminary results of an investigation suggested the "criminals" had crossed from the Greek Cypriot side, and were technically outside its jurisdiction when they fired the shots. The statement stopped short of suggesting they were Greek Cypriots.

Turkey's foreign minister, Tansu Ciller, said: "We have learnt that there was an infiltration from the English base and this soldier was shot, and I am afraid that we have found the guns used are actually similar to the guns used by the Greek [Cypriot] police and the military."

A government spokesman, Yiannakis Cassoulides, said a check of all weapons carried by National Guardsmen in the area showed none had been fired.

The two victims in Dherynia, Tassos Isaac and Solomos Solomou, have been afforded virtual martyrdom among Greek Cypriots.

Efforts by the UN and international diplomats to reduce the tension of the past few weeks have failed, with the Cypriot president, Glafcos Clerides, refusing to meet Mr Denktash.

US policy conspires only to hurt the people of Iraq

ON THE morning of September 1, President Clinton stated that the recent US decision to resort to military force against Iraq was made in response to the latest acts of brutality by the forces of Saddam Hussein on the civilian population of Irbil. He gave us the impression that his decision was based in large part on humanitarian grounds. I would like to suggest that — far from humanitarian considerations — the president's actions were based on a desire to dispel the notion that he is a weak leader, thereby improving his chances of re-election.

The US position is astonishingly hypocritical. The reality on the ground in Iraq is that US bombardments — while unlikely to affect Saddam directly — are certain to make life more difficult for the civilian population as a whole. We must not forget that ordinary Iraqis have suffered in ways we cannot imagine over the past five years.

Major problems for the Iraqis since the end of the Gulf war have been caused by United Natons and international decrees which have conspired to deny desperately needed food and medicines on a consistent basis. Strictly speaking, the US has played a large part in the most reprehensible abuse of the Iraqi people for five years. If the president is sincere in his concern for Iraqi people he would simply employ US power to rush food and medical supplies to children dying of dehydration as a result of economic privation imposed by the UN.

I am sure that many people would join me in looking forward to a time when unacceptable election campaign tactics in the US include negative advertising — in addition to the squandering of hundreds of million of dollars of US taxpayers' money in bombings visited on impoverished countries of the Third World.

Robert D Pates,
Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

WHATEVER justification there may be for military action against Saddam Hussein's regime, no one should be under any illusion that it stems from a concern for the Kurdish people.

Prior to the Gulf war, neither the United States nor Britain showed the remotest concern for the plight of the Kurds or the Marsh Arabs. After the Gulf war, the West used the plight of the Kurds in a cynical move to embarrass Saddam by exercising control over Iraqi territory with the establishment of the so-called "safe havens".

Yet Saddam has committed no crime which has not been exceeded in south-eastern Turkey (north-west Kurdistan) by successive Turkish regimes. Because of its perceived strategic importance to the West, Britain, America and Germany have not only acquiesced in the war of genocide against the Kurds, they have provided Turkey with the weapons to carry it out.

John Austin-Walker MP,
House of Commons, London

YOUR leader (The politics of hijacking, September 8) rightly made a case against granting political asylum to the Iraqi hijackers. However, you could have pointed out that the Iraqis today are desperate people, tormented both by Saddam and the West.

In its determination to topple Saddam, the West spearheaded the UN sanctions against Iraq, hoping that the resultant economic hardship would de-legitimise his regime and precipitate its collapse. Saddam may have been weakened by the trade sanctions, but the real victims of this collective punishment have been the people of Iraq. Six years of crippling sanctions have caused widespread malnutrition and destroyed the social welfare system.

The UN appears to be legitimising human suffering in Iraq at the behest of the West.

Randhir Singh Bains,
Gants Hill, Essex

Muddied divide in Cyprus

WHILE much of the editorial concerning Cyprus (Danger across the divide, August 25) is undoubtedly true, the omission of certain key factors distorts the analysis. There is no mention of the 35,000 foreign troops stationed in the north of the island since 1974. It fails to point out that as long as the breakaway regime in the north enjoys Ankara's unreserved support there will be no movement toward "meaningful dialogue". And, in what is perhaps the most serious omission of all, there is no mention of the massive presence in the north of settlers from the Turkish mainland.

Consequently, when you speak of the proportion of the territory to be eventually conceded to the "Turkish Cypriots", just whom do you include? Properly speaking, the term should be reserved for those Turkish-speaking Cypriots who resided in Cyprus at the time of the invasion, a large percentage of whom have since emigrated. Meanwhile, the 60,000 to 80,000 settlers who have been brought over from the mainland are completely beholden to the regime since they have been assigned houses and lands which legally belonged to the Greek Cypriots (180,000 or more) who fled and/or were expelled to the south by the 1974 invasion. The number of these new "Cypriots" is (at least) approaching the number of the original Turkish Cypriots who still reside in the north.

It is not simply a matter of the two original Cypriot communities deciding to bury the hatchet in order to "work out practical ways of living together". The eventual resolution of the Cyprus problem is much more complicated than that.

Verne H Fletcher,
Limassol, Cyprus

Birt's hype is all tripe

AS I SIT on my terrace in the warm September sunshine, John Birt's vision of the future of the BBC (September 1) reads like the product of an overheated brain.

Can he really believe that in the year 2006 — or even in 2011 — my *postina* will grind up a kilometre of bumpy gravel road to deliver a pair of football boots ordered the night before via my digital black box? In a country where the power goes off every time there is a thunderstorm and where most telephones still use pulse dialling? Where it takes the Guardian Weekly two weeks to reach me? Even more unlikely, if the viewer is watching from a one-room flat in Bombay. To 95 per cent of the world, Mr Birt's vision is ludicrous hype and tripe.

Then there is the question of cost. How much are all these middlemen, the telecom quangos, cable-operators and channel purveyors, going to cream off? Judging by Mr Murdoch's efforts, as much as the traffic will bear. To access Sky costs about £300 a year, against (what is it?) £90 for the Beeb and about £70 for RAI. My telephone bill came in today; about £120 for two months, covering a domestic telephone and fax. A rough calculation tells me that the bill would double if I accessed the Internet.

Most people could do with a simple, reliable television service, which will give them entertainment, news and maybe some education. I don't think they really care much if it isn't even in colour. The old BBC seemed to fill that role pretty well. I just hope the new BBC can come somewhere near. If it can't we would be better off scrapping it.

John Durst,
Trestina, Italy

ID cards must be identical

THE confusion surrounding the issue of UK ID cards reveals a level of paranoid sensitivity. The number of available options seem to have been decided by pre-election jitters and not common sense. Surely ID cards — nothing new to most Western countries — demand that they should be both mandatory and identical.

The unofficial Australian ID card is the driver's licence, which has a photograph incorporated but no indication of cultural, ethnic or political background. Given that Australia is probably the ultimate cultural melting-pot, one shudders to think of the number of options that would have been necessary if it had adopted the current UK policy.

The system seems to work — having arrived only six weeks ago and not yet obtained our Australian licences, my wife and I have on occasions felt naked without one. We will willingly accept them as markers of our identity and not of our political beliefs.

Peter Stow,
Ocean Grove, Victoria, Australia

Triggers of violence

SURELY Dr Frank Appleton is being a little disingenuous when he asserts (September 8) that "the massacres at Dunblane and Port Arthur could have been committed without a firearm", and that "anyone can construct a device capable of bringing down a 747 airliner".

Has the doctor any idea of the current price of Semtex, even at a discount store? Or of a rocket-launcher? Scarcity has made it a seller's market — at least in Tasmania.

But what could be more effective than a rapid-fire rifle in bringing down more than 30 people in a widespread, open area? A pack of ravening tigers, perhaps? Such beasts, however, are a somewhat limited resource these days in Tasmania. Bullets are not.

By all means let politicians "tackle the real problem . . . which is violence itself". But let them start by banning the very guns which Dr Appleton seeks to protect.

Barrie Brockwell,
Annandale, NSW, Australia

Briefly

YOUR editorial regarding paedophilia (Chasing the wrong target, September 1) ended by admonishing that "above all, we need to re-educate men: having sex with children is wrong".

Men do not need to be re-educated. Men already know. It is paedophiles that need to be re-educated. Not all men are paedophiles. Neither are all paedophiles men, although most are.

Unfortunately, your stereotype lends credence to the worst excesses of testosterone bashers. It is as far-fetched as if you had concluded with a call for "the re-education of women: selling sex for money is wrong" — implying that all women are latent prostitutes, and that all prostitutes are women.

Ridding the world of paedophilia is a laudable goal. Let us not confuse the issues by labelling all men with the perversions of the few.

M Stuart Lynn,
Berkeley, California, USA

MAY I express my horror and anger at the fate of nearly 70,000 live sheep abandoned to die on a burning cargo ship en route from Australia to the Middle East?

Many Australians are appalled by the live sheep trade, which was originally justified as a lucrative alternative market for farmers suffering from the downturn in the demand for wool, and has grown into a multi-million dollar business. In practice it involves unimaginably cruel treatment of these animals. I urge all readers to write to the Australian government demanding a ban on the trade.

Gillian Appleton,
Wentworth Falls, NSW, Australia

I AM sorry to inform Eileen Smith (September 1) that there is within freemasonry a women's section known as the OES (Order of the Evening Star). There is also a further section known as the "Daughters of Job", for the daughters of freemasons. Therefore, appointing a woman to chair a public body would not necessarily guarantee the post was free from the influence of freemasonry.

Peter Oates Kemp,
Cooroy, Queensland, Australia

IT IS deeply worrying that the story about the released heroin dealers (September 8) was "taken off the airwaves after pressure from the Home Office". Does the BBC often yield to such pressure, I wonder?

Fiona Carnie,
Bath

JOHN MAJOR has just described Norma as a "great asset". Does this mean she is to be sold off and stripped before the election?

Alwyn Davies,
Manchester

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Spectre of Karadzic hangs over poll

Julian Borger in Sarajevo

RADOVAN KARADZIC is not there in person but his presence is as tangible as the early autumn chill. His chubby face smiles coyly from posters in the crowd. His name punctuates every speech. The 3,000 Bosnian Serbs who turn up to the rally are in no doubt for whom they are supposed to be voting on September 14.

"Our unique, legendary Radovan Karadzic is the greatest Serb among us, and we would like him to be here now," Nedeljko Prstojevic, a minor party functionary, shouts to the crowd.

They cheer when they hear Karadzic's name. Behind Prstojevic there is an empty picture-frame, where the leader's portrait is presumably supposed to hang.

His absence only heightens the aura of quasi-religious mystery, as Prstojevic stretches his obsequious eulogy to absurd lengths: "He is the man whose picture we hold aloft like the icon of St George . . . Brothers and sisters, for these past years, God must clearly have been a Serb."

Anywhere else, the rhetoric would be laughable, but we have stepped through the looking glass. We are in the only Serb-held scrap of urban Sarajevo — a few streets of the former Olympic village called Dobrinja.

Many parts of Sarajevo are a mess, but Serb Dobrinja, in its self-imposed isolation, is the most tawdry and depressing corner of the city.

In this inverted world, the poster hanging across the shrapnel-scarred streets in the midst of this squalor seems strangely appropriate. It says: "We have made it. Let's continue." It is the slogan of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), the separatist clique which first declared, then ethnically cleansed, and now jealously clings to, its territorial creation — the Republika Srpska.

The SDS rally in Dobrinja is bad news for all the international institutions attempting to nudge Bosnia through a transition to a peaceful and stable equilibrium.

It is not just because the speeches are all xenophobic and combative. The constant references to Karadzic, who led the Bosnian Serbs right through the war, are a direct challenge to the validity of the elections.

According to the rules that have been drawn up by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) — which is supervising the elections — any party which links itself with an indicted war criminal is liable for disqualification.



A young Bosnian Serb supporter wears a mask of Karadzic at an SDS rally PHOTOGRAPH ENRIC MARTI

Karadzic, who has been twice indicted for crimes against humanity and genocide by the UN war crimes tribunal, has stepped down, after intense international pressure, from all formal positions of power. But his party's unceasing worship of this failed poet and former psychiatrist is designed to chew away gradually at the edges of the rules until they are worthless.

It is clear that the SDS plan is to bring Karadzic out of hiding with a flourish, after its expected triumph among Serb voters at the elections.

The OSCE is caught in a vice. To do nothing about these violations would further erode its credibility, which has already plummeted since it conceded its political campaign fund was bankrolling a party run by one of the most notorious Serb ethnic cleansers of the war, Arkan.

But to disqualify the SDS would almost certainly lead to a boycott of the ballot in the Republika Srpska, rendering the entire election useless in terms of its principal goal — the creation of shared, multi-ethnic institutions to help knit the divided country back together.

The OSCE is visibly squirming, but officials admit privately that they are under constant pressure from Western capitals to get the elections over with, so Nato can begin to disengage.

On Saturday, 900,000 voters in the Republika Srpska, and possibly more than 2 million in the Muslim-Croat Federation, are due to elect assemblies for their own regional governments. They will also be choosing a joint parliament for the whole country and a joint presidency, comprising one Muslim, one Serb and one Croat.

Carl Bildt, the international community's viceroy in Bosnia, will have the job of trying to make these joint institutions work. In Brussels last week, he said his priority would be to convene the joint presidency within 10 days of the elections being certified legal. It would need a "concerted and sustained" international effort throughout the autumn. "It is highly complex. It is a question of bringing together people who have been fighting against each other . . . and getting them to work together," Mr Bildt told journalists.

The difficulties he faces were amply illustrated in Dobrinja last week. Republika Srpska's acting president Biljana Plavsic (a prim, coiffured woman oddly reminiscent of Baroness Thatcher) strenuously nurtured her audience's sense of isolation and their contempt for Muslims.

"Yes, we do want brotherhood and unity, but only with other Serbs in the Balkans. Not with them," she cried. The former biologist could not even bring herself to use the word "Muslim".

She rounded off with a direct appeal to a deep-seated Serb sense of paranoia. "The world is against us. The world has never understood us and it never will."

Mr Bildt is planning an array of economic sanctions to beat the Serbs into line after the elections. Plavsic is preparing her followers for defiance and secession. There is an almost masochistic glee in her voice.

But she is right on one count. Rational Westerners, such as Mr Bildt, a former Swedish prime minister, can never really understand the Serbs. In the looking-glass world of the Republika Srpska, Lenin's maxim holds good: "The worse it gets, the better."

Pol Pot defector says he is blameless

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Phnom Malai

THE once closed world of this key Khmer Rouge military base was invaded by foreign media on Monday as Ieng Sary, the former intimate of Pol Pot and now leader of a breakaway Khmer Rouge faction, presented his case for reconciliation in exchange for peace.

Villagers lined the dirt roads of the base in north-west Cambodia as Russian-built helicopters ferried journalists, officials and government troops from the border and the capital Phnom Penh as Cambodia took another step towards peace.

Ieng Sary, the former deputy prime minister of a regime that caused the deaths of 2 million Cambodians — for which he and his former brother-in-law Pol Pot were sentenced to death in absentia in 1979 — showed no anxiety about his future. "I know my case will be solved because everyone wants peace," he said confidently.

The press conference may be a sign that his future is secure. The government said Ieng Sary has agreed to put Phnom Malai and the nearby base of Pailin, along with several thousand troops, under government control. He said he is just waiting to hear that King Sihanouk has agreed to grant him an amnesty.

With his future thus seemingly assured, Ieng Sary, who said he was 76, wasted no time on feelings of remorse. "I have no regret because of the fact that I had nothing to do with ordering the execution of anyone."

For good measure he quoted the London-based Cambodia scholar Steven Heder as saying that there was no clear proof of Ieng Sary being implicated in the purge of intellectuals.

All the blame for the horrors of Khmer Rouge rule lay with Pol Pot as the head of a "gang of four" who, through a secret security committee, "decided all the killings and massacres", the dissidents assert.

Ieng Sary claims that he had differences with Pol Pot 15 years before he came to power. He said he only stayed because "I wanted to preserve our unity and thought it was still possible to express my opinion to a certain extent".

Before driving off in a new Land Cruiser provided by the Phnom Penh army, he performed another macabre gesture of reconciliation when he handed a diplomat a brown paper bag wrapped in Cellophane which held the cremated remains of Mathias Wolfe. The German, who was in his early 30s, had travelled by motorcycle across the border from Thailand into Khmer Rouge territory two years ago. He was captured and promptly executed.

Yeltsin admits he needs heart surgery

James Meek in Moscow

PRESIDENT Boris Yeltsin admitted to the Russian people last week what they had long believed, that he is gravely ill and will enter hospital for heart surgery at the end of the month.

In what could be the riskiest throw of the dice yet by an inveterate political gambler, he decided that to clearly acknowledge one real sickness would make him stronger than leaving the country to imagine a thousand more. "I want us to have a society of truth. We should not conceal what has been concealed before," he said.

Years of Kremlin cover-ups, denials and feverish media speculation about his health were set aside when he appeared on television to say his doctors had given him a choice.

"The recommendation of the doctors was: either an operation or a, so to say, passive form of work," Mr Yeltsin, aged 65, said, speaking slowly with long pauses between phrases. "But passive work never suited me, and won't suit me now. It's better for me to have an operation and to be restored to full health — as they promise — than passive action, passive work."

The assurances of the Kremlin doctors are unlikely to ease increased tension between his possible successors. In the short term, it is not clear who, if anyone, will be designated acting head of state while the president is on the operating table.

Neither Mr Yeltsin nor his aides gave any hint as to the nature of the operation. Previous reports have suggested he needed heart bypass surgery.

He is likely to be treated at the respected Cardiac Research Centre on the outskirts of Moscow, headed by Yevgeny Chazov, responsible for the virtual living mummification of Leonid Brezhnev.

Ivan Rykunov, head of the cardiac surgery research laboratory at the Russian Academy of Sciences, said bypass surgery usually involved a month in hospital and two months of rehabilitation.

Mr Yeltsin, who is on holiday at a hunting lodge outside Moscow, looked puffy and tired during the television interview with the RAI news agency. But he was well enough to meet Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany at the weekend. Afterwards Mr Kohl said the Russian president was "very optimistic" about his coming operation.

David Hearst in Moscow adds: A permanent end to hostilities in Chechenia moved a step closer when the Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, grudgingly gave his assent to the peace plan devised by his political rival, General Alexander Lebed.

This paved the way for the approval of President Yeltsin, who has so far refused to meet Gen Lebed in person.

Mr Chernomyrdin said the agreements signed by Gen Lebed and the rebel Chechen chief of staff, Aslan Maskhadov, "caused some concern but on the whole we consider them right . . . We should act within the framework of these agreements and keep to their thrust."

Washington Post, page 15

Netanyahu in the dock over Gaza summit

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

SECURITY has been tightened around the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, following his controversial summit last week at Gaza's border crossing with the Palestinian president, Yasser Arafat.

Hardline Jews have accused their prime minister of betraying his ideology and election promises that he would never meet the "mass murderer".

Only hours after the meeting, Israeli police arrested a Jewish rightwing extremist who was discovered wandering around Mr Netanyahu's Jerusalem office. They refused to disclose his identity.

The prime minister has come in for strong criticism from members of his own government, senior officials of the ruling Likud party and leaders of the 140,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The summit overshadowed the Likud convention in Tel Aviv attended by 3,000 delegates, the majority of whom are against contact with Mr Arafat. Two cabinet ministers, Benny Begin and General Ariel Sharon, are at the forefront of a rejectionist coalition that has promised to make trouble for Mr Netanyahu.

"This summit has one implication — we have been dealt a serious blow from which we will find it difficult to recover," said Mr Begin, who holds the science portfolio.

Reactions among Jewish settlers, 95 per cent of whom voted for Mr Netanyahu, were even stronger. Their leaders held an emergency meeting to discuss the implications of the Arafat-Netanyahu handshake. They decided to launch a national protest campaign against what they fear may be Mr Netanyahu's surrender to the Palestinians. "We're not totally loyal to any person, even if we helped in his election," said a statement from the settler movement.

Some have taken their cue from Zvi Katzover, the mayor of Kiryat Arba, a stronghold of anti-Arab hardliners. "This is a black day for the state of Israel and the Jewish population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," he said. "Netanyahu has proven that he is a prisoner of the Oslo Accord and he will eventually fall."

But the former prime minister, Shimon Peres, the architect of the peace process, welcomed the meeting, regretting only "that it took too long". He said Mr Netanyahu should now apologise to his murdered predecessor, Yitzhak Rabin.

Mr Peres's sentiments were echoed by Rabin's widow, Leah, who said: "Now everyone knows Yitzhak died for nothing. He certainly knew better than anyone else what security means. If you realise now there is no other way, no alternative, why is he dead?"

● President Clinton engaged in a round of mild arm-twisting with Mr Netanyahu at the White House on Monday, gently urging him to accelerate the peace process with the Palestinians but avoiding any show of tension with a crucial political ally.

White House aides said Mr Clinton would request "progress on the ground" from Mr Netanyahu, who has irritated Washington with his laggardly approach to peace.

South African court orders revisions to constitution

Chris McGreal in Johannesburg

SOUTH Africa's constitutional court last week threw out the country's new multi-racial constitution over the distribution of powers to the regions, union rights, and the independence of government watchdogs.

President Nelson Mandela said he welcomed the decision as an opportunity to clarify the new constitution. But it raised the prospect of renewed political bloodletting on some of the most controversial battlegrounds fought over during the drafting of the original document.

Praising the constitution as basically sound and a monumental achievement, the court none the less sent it back to South Africa's elected constitutional assembly for revision within 90 days. The court said the constitution had failed in nine separate ways to meet a set of guiding principles laid down by multi-party negotiations during the transition to democracy. These ranged from protection of individual rights to the distribution of power.

The judges ruled that the new constitution gives the provinces substantially less power than they were allotted in the principles. The court threw out an entire chapter dealing with local government, saying it failed to lay out a defined power structure or provide sufficient control of finances.

But in a separate judgment, the court established the limits of powers for the provinces when it rejected a regional constitution written for KwaZulu-Natal by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party, which opponents said bordered on declaring secession.

The court described the document as "fatally flawed" and a "usurpation of national power" which implied that KwaZulu-Natal thinks it is a sovereign state.

The court's ruling on the national constitution appeared implicitly to recognise that the African National Congress (ANC) is likely to be in power for at least the next generation, and so sought to emphasise a decentralisation of power.

The court said the new constitution had insufficient safeguards for independent government watchdogs. It also rejected an attempt to make labour laws immune to legal challenges and ordered a strengthening of individual employers' rights. But it let stand the right to strike without a reciprocal right for employers to lock out workers.

The judges gave renewed hope to the victims of state-sponsored violence under apartheid by rejecting a provision which put the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, beyond the jurisdiction of the courts. The judges' ruling appears to mean that while those responsible for extrajudicial murders and other crimes might be protected from criminal prosecution the way could still be open to civil suits by victims.

The ANC fears its opponents may go back to the constitutional assembly intent on unravelling more than just the elements of the new constitution declared unacceptable. Although the judges clearly defined the areas requiring revision, there is nothing to prevent the assembly from trying to amend any parts of the constitution it wishes.

The National Party leadership, which quit the coalition government in May in protest at the dispersal of powers in the new constitution, welcomed the ruling but said it was not intent on refighting old battles.

Miss Italy in race row

John Hooper in Rome

THE Miss Italy contest ended in uproar at the weekend when the title was won by a black immigrant. Whistles of disapproval were audible above the applause as Dominican-born Denny Mendez burst into tears on stage.

Still crying, she was crowned by a juror who hours earlier had said a black should not represent Italian womanhood.

Newspapers added fuel to the controversy: La Stampa headlined its story, "Denny Mendez is the first Miss Black"; and Il Giornale declared, "Miss Italy is Dominican".

In fact, the winner holds Italian citizenship and has an Italian father.

The competition organisers say not only was she the choice of the jury but she was also the choice of television viewers.

Despite many Italians' passionate insistence that they are not racist, to outsiders the definition of who qualifies as Italian seems restricted.

Ironically, it was a half-Italian, the fashion photographer "Bob" Krieger, who prompted the row.

He said Ms Mendez, aged 18, should not be chosen because "she does not represent the beauty that is typical of Italy". Mr Krieger was thrown off the panel of judges.

Another judge, Alba Parietti, said she agreed. She too was expelled, but reinstated after a bizarre semi-retraction.

"I let slip my thoughts, not being aware of the rules, which allow any girl of Italian nationality, whatever her colour, to take part," she said. Ms Parietti crowned the winner.



Striking back . . . Aleida Guevara standing in front of the famous image of her father, Che PHOTOGRAPH: NICHOLAS REYNAR

Old comrades trade insults

Paul Webster

REGIS DEBRAY and Dariel Alarcon Ramirez, two rare survivors of Che Guevara's 1960s Bolivian rebellion, have publicly turned against their former Cuban backer and friend Fidel Castro, with accusations of treachery by Havana.

Cuba has in turn accused Mr Debray, who was jailed and tortured by the Bolivian army, of betraying Che. It has also denounced him as a "traitor" for encouraging an exiled Cuban resistance movement of which Mr Ramirez is a leader.

Havana's condemnation came after the two men published books describing Dr Castro's regime as Stalinist and claiming he had abandoned the rebels to their fate in 1967.

In the ensuing verbal skirmish, Che's daughter, Aleida Guevara, who is married to a member of the Cuban security forces, has blamed Mr Debray for "talking more than necessary" while in prison, six months before her father was captured and shot by a Bolivian army firing squad in October 1967.

"He was never really Che's companion," she said. "It's sad that a man like Régis Debray, so linked to communism and the socialist movement, should pass suddenly and totally to the other side."

Mr Debray issued a statement saying he had written enough about the rebellion in La Guérilla du Che in 1974 not to have to justify his behaviour in prison "every time it suits Havana to spit on its old friends".

He accused Ms Guevara of being under Dr Castro's orders when she attacked him in an interview in Clarin, a newspaper in Argentina, Che's native country. Denouncing Havana's "Stalinist" tactics, Mr Debray added that Cuba's police state had become its own caricature.

Mr Ramirez described Ms Guevara's attack on Mr Debray as "new proof of the cynical Stalinism which has taken hold of a revolution which I loved and served when it was still a revolution".

The Week

RAMZI Ahmed Yousef, an explosives expert, and two accomplices, Abdul Hakim Murad and Wali Khan Amin Shah, were convicted in New York of plotting to blow up a dozen American airliners during a 48-hour period last year.
Washington Post, page 16

INDIA said that it will block Australia's UN resolution banning nuclear test blasts, despite the proposal's overwhelming support among UN members.

LOCAL elections aimed at restoring democracy in Kashmir after a seven-year Muslim-led rebellion has begun with 200,000 security forces keeping watch on the proceedings.
Washington Post, page 16

BELGIAN police detained 23 people in the city of Charleroi in connection with a paedophile ring. Among those held are 11 police officers. Earlier, four men were also arrested in connection with the 1991 murder of former deputy prime minister André Cools.
Le Monde, page 14

THE people on the Japanese island of Okinawa have voted overwhelmingly in favour of reducing the huge American military presence on their island.

ARKANSAN businesswoman Susan McDougal has gone to prison for refusing to give evidence against Bill Clinton, her original partner in the Whitewater investment. But the president's former political consultant, Dick Morris, threatened new embarrassments for the White House by agreeing to testify before a congressional committee.

HURRICANE Fran hit the US mainland at Cape Fear, battering the Carolinas with 185kph winds, ripping apart trees and killing at least 15 people.

THE World Food Programme, a UN aid agency, is due to deliver the first food for eight months to the besieged town of Tubmanburg in Liberia, where relief workers have found thousands of people starving.

BRITISH holidaymaker Brian Hagland was murdered near Bondi Beach in Australia by two youths thought to be high on drugs.

EMILY Kngwarreye, the legendary Aboriginal painter and one of Australia's foremost contemporary artists, has died, aged 86.

AMERICAN chat show hostess Oprah Winfrey has again been ranked top of Forbes magazine's list of the 40 best paid entertainers. Her combined earnings for this year and last reached $171 million.

Deng steps into Mao's shoes — and his myth

As China lies in thrall to the will of a dying man, the succession struggle now raging recalls an earlier deathbed drama, writes **Andrew Higgins**

IN SEPTEMBER 1976, the ailing Mao Zedong stirred briefly from unconsciousness to deliver a last enigmatic message to feuding Communist Party courtiers assembled around his deathbed.

Bloated by disease and drugs, unable to speak and too weak to scrawl a note, China's Great Teacher, Great Leader, Great Commander and Great Helmsman put his thumb and forefinger together to form a circle. He then lifted his arm to trace another circle in the air.

Three days later, Mao was dead. "In the last days of his life, he bequeathed a riddle in the shape of a circle to his empire," wrote the Chinese novelist Liu Yazhou.

Some explain Mao's gesture as a warning to fractious lieutenants to stick together — to avoid the vicious purges that dominated his life and, he knew, would follow his death. Mr Liu, who first revealed the odd episode, offers another explanation. "I'd say he was describing his own history. He began in Tiananmen Square and that is where he ended up. He had travelled a big circle."

Twenty years on, China, too, has come full circle. Reforms since Mao's death have transformed the economy. But politics have again been frozen by the deathbed drama of an aged leader too feeble to issue orders but too potent to be ignored.

Deng Xiaoping, who turned 92 last month, has not been seen in public for 30 months. He is said to be suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease and other ailments that have sapped his strength and muddled his mind. Although never the focus of a delirious personality cult like Mao, Mr Deng leaves his country no less in thrall to the will of a single man.

He has even taken on a Mao-style title: the Great Architect of Reform. Mr Deng is unlikely to follow Mao into a crystal sarcophagus in Tiananmen Square. He wants to be cremated, in keeping with a pledge made by the entire leadership — including Mao — in 1956.

But in the most literal sense Mr Deng has already stepped into the dead man's shoes. Impressed by the craftsmanship of a pair of cloth slippers hand-sewn for the Great Helmsman's corpse, Mr Deng ordered a pair from the same cobbler.

Sun Yat-sen, a medical doctor and professional plotter who, more through accident than design, took over as China's ruler after the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, despaired at the repetitious cycles of Chinese political struggle.

"In the history of China through the generations, the imperial throne has always been fought over, and all the periods of anarchy have had their origin in this. For the past few thousand years there has been a continual struggle around the single issue of who is to become emperor."

The advent of communism in 1949 did nothing to release China from this pattern. Would-be emperors still struggle — mostly over the corpse and the legacy of the departing one.

Unlike the Soviet Union, where Khrushchev established his authority with a denunciation of Stalin, China has never formally debunked Mao, though it has buried his policies, criticised the "mistakes" of his dotage and pulped millions of copies of his Little Red Book.

To mark the 20th anniversary of Mao's death this week, state publishers issued three new volumes of the "Collected Works of Mao Zedong". Newspapers splashed across their front pages the news of the latest publications but did not mention his now-defunct policies of endless proletarian revolution.

While uprooting Mao's revolutionary creed, Mr Deng has portrayed himself as a loyal successor. Fearful of undermining the foundations of its own rule, the party never dumped "Mao Zedong Thought" but merely redefined it as a collective project.

But even in the grave Mao is hard to control. Thousands of Chinese formed a long queue under the scorching sun for a glimpse of the embalmed body of the Great Helmsman, lying in a crystal coffin at a mausoleum on Tiananmen Square in the heart of Beijing. What began as a state-sponsored communist cult has become a popular craze. The party clings to Mao's name and keeps his portrait on the gate to the Forbidden City as a symbol of its legitimacy. For many ordinary Chinese, Mao is folk deity, pop icon and even totem of discontent.

So potent is Mao mythology that the man responsible for the most murderous famine of the modern era and the apocalyptic chaos of the Cultural Revolution is now often seen as a Buddha-like bearer of good luck and prosperity.

Mr Deng's death will probably, in time, inspire a new set of legends, fads and myths. Whoever emerges as his ultimate successor will struggle to claim, redefine and somehow control his legacy.

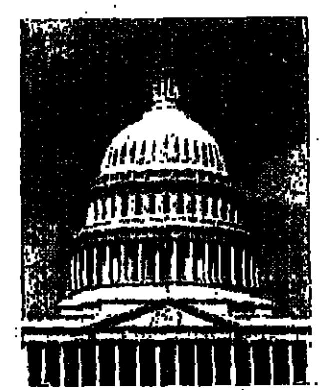
Over the years, Mao named four different successors: Liu Shaoqi died half-naked in a cold cellar, Lin Biao in a mysterious plane crash in Mongolia, and Wang Hongwen in prison. Hua Guofeng, the only survivor, lost out to Mr Deng in the struggle that Mao supposedly warned against.

Mr Deng is said to have issued his own warnings. A Hong Knog magazine reported that he mumbled an appeal for unity to leaders who gathered at his bedside to wish him a happy birthday.

Mr Deng's designated heirs have fared better physically than those anointed by Mao, but not politically. He has purged two chosen successors: Hu Yaobang in 1987 and Zhao Ziyang two years later.

The hot seat is now occupied by Jiang Zemin, the "core" of what is supposed to be a solid leadership ready to take the country beyond the era of emperors.

Dole inspects life rafts while Clinton cruises



The US this week

Martin Walker

IT WAS, from the American point of view, a lovely crisis. It had the deep-dyed and familiar villain, Saddam Hussein. It had bold and decisive military action from Commander Clinton, without a single American life put at risk. It featured a reliable supporting actor, Great Britain, playing "loyal little ally". The US Air Force and the Navy both got leading parts. And it quite knocked out of the national mind any scurrilous gossip about the presidential political consultant Dick Morris. All that, and the missile strikes won 81 per cent approval ratings in the first ABC poll.

An American president two months short of re-election really cannot ask for a better crisis than that, whatever the foreign policy pundits may grumble about shredded coalitions, strained alliances and the curious absence of any strategic thinking about Iraq, Iran or the worrying way Turkey appears to be inching away from its dutiful traditions as a Nato ally.

The air strikes went in, were repeated, and the Iraqis began to withdraw. At least, in sensible precaution against possible air strikes, they dispersed their forces, which could be said to look like a withdrawal. Bill Clinton declared victory, and got on with his campaign, and British diplomats preened that "when the chips are down, the Americans still know there is only one ally that counts".

The late-night television comics had a field day. Jay Leno declared: "The US military has launched cruise missiles against Iraq, or as the White House is calling it, Operation Re-Elect Clinton." David Letterman also found a domestic political theme: "This Saddam Hussein is a maniacal dictator. He is a demagogue. He is a ruthless paranoid, and if he is not stopped, he could become another Ross Perot."

Meanwhile, in the Kurdish city of Irbil, the vicious military intelligence snatch squads of General Ali Hassan Majid reaped a rich haul, of prisoners and of documents from the abandoned offices of the Iraqi opposition. Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein and a member of the close-knit Takriti gang, is a former minister of defence and the interior. He is best known as the thug who was made governor of Kuwait during Iraq's brief and ruthless occupation. He deserves to be better known as the man who directed the 1988 "Anfal" campaign of suppression against the Kurds of northern Iraq, which included the use of poison gas against the women and children of Halabja.

On August 20, Ali Chemical (as the Kurds call him) was made governor of Kirkuk, in charge of the reinforced Republican Guard armoured division forming up ominously just south of the Kurdish no-fly zone. The most ruthless of Saddam's troubleshooters, Majid suggested by his very presence that something serious was under way. So it was. A small armoured brigade of Iran's Pasdaran Revolutionary Guard had crossed into northern Iraq to take sides in the Kurdish civil war. Saddam was then invited in to help block Iran by the other Kurdish faction.

The Americans now think they know why Saddam took his gamble. He assumed that, however much Washington despised him, it hated Iran even more. The one licence Clinton might grant Saddam was to stop any expansion of Iran's influence into Kurdistan.

In this Saddam was thumpingly wrong. The president's intelligence briefs had not focused on any obscure Kurdish tribal skirmishes in the Koi Senjak mountains. They had, rather, warned Clinton that he could be going into an election campaign with Saddam back on the rampage.

Clinton's decision to respond made itself, with his Republican challenger, Bob Dole, accusing him of "a failure of American leadership", as soon as the news broke of the Iraqi armoured assault on the Kurdish city of Irbil. Almost immediately, Clinton approved in principle the plan to destroy Iraq's remaining air defence system, and extend the no-fly zones. The aim was "to humiliate Saddam Hussein in front of his own military", said White House spokesman Mike McCurry.

The plan was also designed to ensure the Americans were not acting alone. They flew two elderly B-52 bombers from the US across the Pacific to Guam. They then flew across the Indian Ocean to refuel at the nominally British island of Diego Garcia, before firing their cruise missiles from Gulf air space. This was the extent of the vaunted "British logistical contribution". But it was enough for many Americans, who have been slapping your correspondent warmly on the back and offering to buy a good ally a drink.

Iranian Pasdaran units are still on Iraqi soil. The Turks have begun what looks to be a long stay in their new security zone inside Iraq, after softening up the ground with their own brisk air strikes, delivered by those efficient US-supplied F-16 warplanes. And a rather prouder Saddam remains in power, with some Kurds looking at least temporarily like loyal Iraqi citizens again.

Poor old Dole, whose prayers for a foreign policy crisis were answered in quite the wrong way, is 18-24 points behind in the polls again — back where he started before his helpful choice of Jack Kemp as running mate, and before his successful convention in San Diego. Dole is 32 points behind among women, and trails Clinton in every age and ethnic group, and in every region of the country. He is within striking distance only in the South, but he looks likely to lose Georgia and maybe even Florida.

Dole has responded with a ritual sacrifice to appease the angry electoral gods. He has done this before. As his campaign faltered in 1988, two of his campaign managers were ordered off the campaign plane and left on a Florida runway. This time his manager, Scott Reed, has secured the resignations of Don Sipple and Mike Murphy, the campaign's media strategists, a move that inspired tired witticisms about shuffling the deck chairs on the Titanic.



Sipple is very good. He crafted the come-from-behind campaign that got Pete Wilson re-elected governor of California. Murphy may be even better. Despite vicious local party divisions, he took former marine colonel Oliver North to within a whisker of winning a US Senate seat in Virginia, and also designed Governor John Engler's victorious campaign in Michigan. He also kept poor Lamar Alexander's presidential bid alive for longer than it deserved.

They resigned because they no longer believed in the message they were being told to deliver, focusing narrowly on tax cuts rather than on the broader social and cultural themes they feel Dole needs. Sipple had also tried to position Dole more in the centre, with a pro-abortion vice-presidential candidate. Sipple's insistence that Jack Kemp, rather than Dole, attend the Christian Coalition's annual conference may now be reversed. The most prominent Californian on the Dole campaign, Sipple had been the most passionate proponent of Dole's need to make a fight of it in this most populous of states. We may now see California abandoned to the Clinton forces.

Poor old Dole, whose prayers for a foreign policy crisis were answered in quite the wrong way

Heaven knows what Dole does now. He has stepped down from the Senate. He has picked his Veep. He has given a grand speech to a united Republican convention. He has seen his wife embraced as a star by America's TV audience. None of it seems to matter, and there are few obvious opportunities left for him to recapture the voters' attention. In fact, barring accidents, all he has left are the three presidential TV debates. And Dole enters these at a disadvantage to a talk-show president who is a clever debater and master of small-screen intimacies.

The last of the three presidential debates in 1992 was watched by 97 million people, almost exactly the number of voters. This is more than four times the TV audience for the conventions, so they are important. Hence the fuss between the two campaigns about how they should be organised. This was supposed to have been settled by the appointment of a bipartisan presidential debate commission, but the campaigns still have the final say.

Put briefly, the Clinton side wants Ross Perot to take part because he will split the anti-Clinton vote and will rubbish Dole's tax cut as a budget-busting deficit binge. For exactly the same reasons, the Dole camp does not want Perot to take part. This is not just a matter of elementary fairness. The commission guidelines state that a candidate with a record of winning a serious vote, who is a credible contender and on the ballot in sufficient states to have a theoretical chance of winning, deserves a place at the debate.

Perot should qualify. He got 19 million votes in 1992, almost one vote in five. He is on the ballot in 47 states already. He has accepted $30 million in federal campaign funds. But he is stalled at 5-6 per cent in the polls, so the Dole camp says he is out of it. When the Clinton camp protests that this isn't fair, the Dole team retorts that, in that case why not have Perot and Ralph Nader join the debates.

The Clintonites do not like that. Nader is the candidate of the Green party, although he is not actively campaigning, nor does he wholly support the Green manifesto. But in California Nader could take a significant fraction of the vote, possibly enough to lose it for Clinton if the race really tightens.

"This is a long way from being over, because this is a flawed president, with whom the voters are not comfortable, and their mood is volatile," says former Congressman Vin Weber, one of the more thoughtful Republicans and an influential Dole adviser. "In the space of the week of our convention at San Diego, the race went from 20 points down to almost even in some polls. Naturally, the president is looking good now, after his own convention and after a sudden foreign policy crisis, which always helps a White House incumbent as the nation rallies round. But the Clinton lead is very skittish."

Other Republicans are getting a respectful hearing with their warnings that Clinton's quick fix in Iraq is storing up a serious Middle East crisis that he will have to face with a badly shredded Gulf war coalition. They note also that Russia is heading back into critical territory, with Boris Yeltsin going for heart surgery, and a serious budget crisis looming this autumn. A case can be made that the two dominant US foreign policy concerns for the foreseeable future are managing Russia's weakness and China's ascension. Despite his tactical skills at dealing with foreign policy crises as they come up, Clinton could be criticised for having little strategic sense.

Paul Wolfowitz, one of the cleverest officials in the Reagan Pentagon, compares these post-cold war days to the twenties and the feckless presidency of Warren Harding, when the US enjoyed peace and prosperity with little thought for the economic and military cataclysms looming 10-15 years ahead. Since the Republicans really ought to be thinking about the next eight weeks, you can see how desperate they are.

There is another clue. Last week Dole campaigned at a New Jersey factory that makes life rafts. Much more of this, and Republican congressmen will cry "Sauve qui peut" and abandon him to save their own political lives.

Loggers 'out of control' in forest chainsaw massacre

David Harrison

THE UNBRIDLED plunder of the world's forests by giant timber firms is increasing at an alarming rate, with Japan's Mitsubishi topping the league of forest "rapists", according to the Environmental Investigation Agency.

A report by the agency identifies 17 of the world's worst offenders and says the $100 billion timber industry is "running out of control", helped by the global market and fuelled by greed. Two firms are accused of corruption and six of illegal practice.

World leaders, it says, are failing to stem the increase in deforestation despite the worthy aims of the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992.

The report compares timber companies to "robber barons" creating social disharmony, threatening rare animals and seriously damaging the environment. It accuses them of exploiting developing countries and undermining their efforts towards sustainable growth. The report also claims that eight timber firms are involved in widespread illegal logging, encouraged by the lack of regulation.

The report, Corporate Power, Corruption and the Destruction of the World's Forests, was published this week to coincide with the opening of the United Nations Inter-Governmental Panel on Forests conference in Geneva. The panel will prepare recommendations for next year's Earth Summit in New York.

Steve Trent, the agency's head of campaigns, said: "Unless swift and decisive action is taken to control the intense pressures on the world's forests, the 20th century's damning legacy will be the extermination of most of the world's species and massive social and economic disturbance."

The report calls for a legally binding Global Forests Agreement to protect "our common natural heritage and the people and wildlife that depend on them for survival".

The timber trade, 95 per cent dominated by transnational firms, is the single greatest threat to the world's richest natural forests, the agency says.

The 17 companies identified by the report control nearly 45 million hectares of forest, an area the size of Sweden. Britain does not have any logging companies, but last year it was the world's second largest importer of Brazilian mahogany after the United States.

Of the 15 firms, Japan's Daishowa and Musa of Indonesia face allegations of corruption and illegal practices. The Canadian companies Macmillan Bloedel and Interfor, Hyundai of South Korea, the Malaysian Rimbunan Hijau, and the US's Georgia Pacific, Stone Container and Weyerhaeuser are accused of illegal practices. These companies are also charged with environmental vandalism along with Japan's Mitsubishi and New Oji, Samling of Malaysia, the US firm Boise Cascade, Rougier of France, the German Klunz and Karl Danzer, and Enso Oy of Finland.

Their growing economic and political muscle has allowed them to undermine national forestry bodies and gain unrestricted access to valuable forests to satisfy a rocketing world demand for timber and paper. They cut corners to boost profits, the agency says. Many operate a "cut-and-run" policy — clearing forests, as in the Russian Far East, and moving on.

Replanting is often inadequate and inappropriate, damaging animal habitats. "Few industries can rival the short-termism of the timber trade," the report says.

Foreign logging has ruined communities in developing countries, including Papua New Guinea and Guyana, where companies have extracted generous tax breaks. A 1995 World Bank report said this destabilising "boom-and-bust" development prevented long-term growth.

The agency's report includes accusations against:

❑ Mitsubishi. Implicated in the "permanent degradation of native forests" all over the world; rode roughshod over local environmental concerns and broke national laws. Has logging operations or timber-buying deals in every continent. Described as "one of the greatest corporate threats to the world's forests".

❑ Hyundai. Involved in large-scale "clear-cutting" in Siberia; failed to reforest huge areas. Negotiated an "alarmingly generous" deal to log 800,000 hectares — 12 per cent — of Cambodia's forest cover, with its obligations detailed in an agreement of just four pages, signed in 1994 without being debated by the Cambodian National Assembly. Cambodia's armed forces are said to allow illegal cutting in return for bribes.

❑ Musa. Illegal logging, "contempt" for local communities and widespread environmental damage in Surinam. Newspapers alleged Musa paid bribes totalling $9 million to politicians for logging rights.

❑ Georgia Pacific, the US's largest importer of tropical hardwood; responded to growing public concern over rainforest destruction in Brazil and other countries with "a mixture of half-measures and doublespeak": target of boycott campaign in US.

❑ Boise Cascade. Under pressure in US for "rapacious" logging practices, the firm moved into Mexico with a scheme to log 400,000 hectares of "old-growth" fir and pine forest.

❑ Karl Danzer. Forest destruction, through "unsustainable and grossly wasteful" operations in Zaire; left "trail of destruction" in Cameroon.

Deforestation is wiping out plant and animal species, increasing soil erosion and flooding and contributing to "global warming". Roads cut into forests by loggers encourage human settlers and provide routes for poachers who use logging trucks to transport leopards, gorillas and chimpanzees, the report says.

Commercial logging makes some 27,000 species extinct each year in tropical forests alone. More than 24 mammal species are threatened, of which 11 are endangered.

The Siberian tiger, the orang-utan, the golden eagle in Russia and the grizzly bear in North America are all under threat. Fifteen tree species are endangered, including the monkey puzzle and the Brazilian rosewood. — *The Observer*

Golden Lion for tale of legendary IRA leader

Derek Malcolm

THE Irish are coming. Michael Collins, Neil Jordan's film about the IRA legend, this week won Venice's Golden Lion for best film after receiving a 10-minute standing ovation at its public screening.

In addition, Liam Neeson who plays Collins — and was rushed from Venice to Parma Hospital to be operated on for a blocked intestine halfway through the festival — was voted best actor by Roman Polanski's jury.

"He's not playing Braveheart and the film's not anti-British," Neil Jordan said. "It's about a man who organised an army and then tried to disperse it — which surely has a lesson for today."

Jordan insisted that the film was as much about the Irish fighting the Irish as the Brits. That seemed to be accepted, which will be a godsend for a nervous Warners, who are putting out the film in Britain but resisting the American idea of a good poster, which has Neeson waving the IRA flag.

Much more surprising than the award given to Neeson was the best actress gong, which went to Victoire Thivisol for her part in Jacques Doillon's Ponette. Aged four, the actress is the youngest to get a major festival award.

She plays, and pretty astoundingly too, a child who loses her mother in a car crash and cannot accept that she will never see her again, despite everything the father (Xavier Beauvois) can do.

Ponette also won the International Critics Award and that may mean increased interest from buyers at a festival where some were in despair at finding a suitable film for audiences suffocated by Hollywood.

Art was given another fair chance against commerce when the jury awarded Otar Iosseliani, the Georgian director now living in France, the special jury prize for Brigands, an overlong but often brilliant parable about the misuse of authority, which naturally enough concentrated its fire on the Stalinist era Iosseliani knew so well.

Ken Loach's Carla's Song, about a Glaswegian bus driver who falls for a Nicaraguan girl and travels with her into the conflict between the Sandinistas and the Contras, won the Gold Medal of the President of the Republic for "a film which emphasises civil progress and human solidarity".

Finally, Chris Penn, Sean's less famous brother, won a best supporting actor award for Abel Ferrara's intense but cliché-ridden Mafia movie, The Funeral. He plays one of three brothers who seeks redemption from crime by killing half his family.

Last echo of empire

OBITUARY
Julian Amery

ALTHOUGH most of the causes to which Julian Amery, who has died aged 77, devoted himself proved irrelevant or downright silly, or were swept away by history, or failed, any account of him written today will be far gentler than any appearing 20 years ago.

Julian Amery was the son of Leopold Amery, one of Churchill's closest and best trusted friends. Educated at Eton and Balliol, he was responsible for the formal revocation by the Oxford Union of its refusal "to fight for King and country". Service as a parachutist in Albania, among that odd group which contained Randolph Churchill and Evelyn Waugh, involved him in an identification with Draza Mihailovic, leader of the Serbian royalist chetniks, which now looks less anachronistic than it did then.

Wartime service was followed by desperate, unsuccessful efforts to save his brother John from the gallows for treason. John Amery was an immature, emotionally unstable person whose futile and unimportant association with the Germans as a wartime broadcaster stemmed from an incapacity to grow up. His execution was a cruel, unnecessary act and it cast a shadow upon Julian Amery. Significantly, all his life the rightwing MP voted against capital punishment.


Amery: rightwing romantic

Entering Parliament for Preston North in 1950, Amery firmly identified with old-fashioned imperialism, hating every concession of the decolonising era. He was a member of that group of rebels, known as the Suez Group, who in 1953 opposed all negotiations with the Egyptians about the status of the Canal Zone. He was a violent partisan of that last great spasm of empire, the 1956 invasion of Suez, on which his father-in-law, Harold Macmillan, blew advantageously hot and then cold. Then, under Macmillan's premiership, he became successively Colonial Under Secretary, Air Minister and Minister for Aviation.

Perhaps the most unattractive moment of his career came when he was obliged to defend the actions at the Hola Camp for detainees in Malawi (then Nyasaland) which are historically identified as a clear-cut brutal massacre. The amorphous meaning of the word "rightwing" was demonstrated by the coolly annihilatory attacks on this crime by Enoch Powell.

At aviation, Amery did something entirely representative of the sixties' habit of thinking big, and wrong. He contracted with France to build the Concorde supersonic airliner, a contract which proved painfully enforceable when wiser thoughts wanted Britain out of a hideously mounting bill of costs.

This nonsense owed something to Amery's francophilia, his belief that somehow Britain and France were a substitutable alternative great power to set against the Americans. This was a throwback to Churchill and his plea in 1940 for Anglo-French unity.

Another Amery preoccupation was to be southern Africa. In fairness, he was not a despiser, still less a hater, of black people, more of a romantic paternalist. He was partly influenced by a very reasonable dislike of the communism he had encountered in the Balkans, partly by a warm comradely feeling towards the settlers. Amery, a romantic through and through, identified with the oxwagon trekker, tending to ignore the sjambok.

In due course he became a supporter of the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia "internal settlement" with Bishop Abel Muzorewa and an opponent of the 1980 Lancaster House agreement which led to Robert Mugabe's emergence as ruler of an independent Zimbabwe. Dropped by Edward Heath from the shadow cabinet in 1965, he sought out and cultivated contacts with Ian Smith, the prime minister of Rhodesia, and maintained them ever after.

Briefly out of Parliament after defeat at Preston in 1966, he quickly returned at a byelection at Brighton Pavilion 1968, where has was to remain until his retirement from the Commons — and acceptance of a life peerage — in 1992.

On the face of it, Amery should have seemed a rather hateful man, a reactionary, and a friend of tyrants. In fact, the whole man was far more attractive than the sum of the parts, which does indeed read like a charge sheet.

For a start, Amery was courteous. Although there was always a tendency to drink — another habit of Churchill's circle — the rage and frustration of the Tory tippler were not his style; the voice just dropped another octave.

Second, he had no vulgar racial concept, though he was sceptical about African proficiency in democratic politics.

Also, as he grew older, Amery grew more reflective. His response to Mrs Thatcher's frantic efforts to tighten official secrecy with yet more laws against treasonable disclosers, rather than loyal leakers, was to gently rebuke her for over-reaction.

Amery was wrong-footed by too much ancestor worship (Churchill, his father Leo Amery and the other men associated with Lord Milner's kindergarten). The irresistible impulse of 1900 would become the impossibilist lost cause of 1960 and a melancholy historic blip by 1980. Devotion to that shambling dream was honourable, but it was not sensible — a comment which serviceably describes an entire life lived against the grain by a decent, serious but often spectacularly wrong-headed man.

Edward Pearce

Julian Amery (Baron Amery of Lustleigh), politician, born March 27, 1919; died September 3, 1996

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Parties aim to sweet-talk voters with tax promises

CONSERVATIVES and Labour started to hurl conflicting figures at one another in an opportunist tax auction which, both parties hope, will secure them an early lead in an election campaign that still has eight long months to run.

Labour's leader, Tony Blair, assured the nation's business leaders that there would be no question of a return to penal tax rates under a Labour government. On the contrary, its aim was to reduce the lowest tax band from 20p to 15p or 10p.

The Tories retaliated with a "New Labour, New Danger" poster showing demon eyes staring from a housewife's purse, and claimed to identify 13 alleged new taxes in Labour's plans. The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, cited the proposed windfall tax on the privatised utilities, the "tartan tax" that could arise from Scottish devolution, and the "teenage tax" deriving from the removal of benefit from some teenagers, and said Mr Blair had invented "slyer, cleverer ways of picking your pocket".

The Tories, for whom tax is normally a trump card, fear they may have lost the public's trust in this area of policy after a string of rises in indirect taxation.

Labour's 10p tax rate is not actually a promise but an aspiration. The Tories propose, but again do not actually promise, a reduction in the standard rate from 23p to 20p. Mr Clarke is careful about any promises for November's Budget, fearing the City might react adversely to excessive tax cuts in a bid to buy votes.

Labour's shadow chancellor, Gordon Brown, calculates that the typical family is now paying £668 more in tax than it was in 1992 because of increases in the four subsequent years. But Mr Clarke asserts that people are £690 better off in real terms than they were in 1992 because of fatter wage packets and lower inflation.

The rival parties were dragging the country into a "crazy auction of promises" said the Liberal Democrat leader, Paddy Ashdown, who opted out of the battle.

THE FORMER Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert (now Lord) Runcie, said he hoped he would be dead before his biography, written by Humphrey Carpenter, hit the bookshops. But the work is about to be published and Lord Runcie is alive and well, though deeply unhappy about some of its revelations.

Mr Carpenter, who was Lord Runcie's chosen biographer, says among other things that the former archbishop considered that the Prince and Princess of Wales were badly matched and that their marriage was "arranged"; that he regularly called in friends for sermon-writing; that he enjoyed the company of gays but that he had been "conscious that they might stab me in the back because I wasn't one of them".

Lord Runcie's admirers will be sorry to learn that he did not even write the sermon after the Falklands war, which infuriated Margaret Thatcher by referring to the "mourning on both sides of the conflict".

He does not complain of inaccuracies, only that his "burblings" into a tape recorder were not meant for publication in his lifetime. Mr Carpenter had deleted passages to which the archbishop objected, but refused to withdraw the book from publication because Lord Runcie had not insisted on a right of veto.

A FRESH SCANDAL broke over the already sullied image of Britain's children's homes when police said they feared for hundreds of youngsters who had passed through a home in Cardiff.

Detectives want to trace 400 former residents of the Taff Vale home in Whitchurch, which was a short-term care and assessment centre between 1985 and 1991, suspecting that physical and sexual abuse of the children there may have been commonplace. Staff have named former colleagues who, they believe, operated a paedophile ring preying on girls and boys.

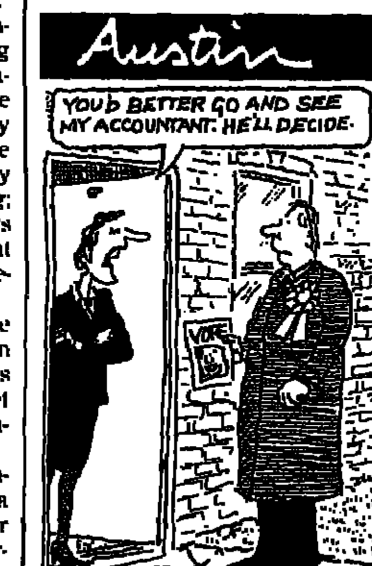
A judicial inquiry opened this week into allegations of abuse at seven children's homes in north Wales. Police inquiries and prosecutions are also continuing into abuse at homes in Cheshire.

THIRTY children were withdrawn by their parents from a school in Nottinghamshire in protest against the readmission of Matthew Wilson, aged 10, who was suspended before the summer holidays, for being disruptive.

Teaching unions had threatened industrial action if the boy was not expelled, but finally persuaded the governors of the school in Worksop that he should be taught by an outsider, in isolation from staff and other pupils.

The unions may now be taken to court by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities for their "bully-boy tactics" in trying to undermine the rights of pupils and their parents to appeal against expulsion.

TORY Ministers reversed more than a decade of attacks on "loony left" classroom policies when they instructed schools to adopt anti-racist and multicultural studies to help students from ethnic minorities. The Government now concedes that "colour blind" policies in schools have failed to tackle inequalities, and that there is concern about the performance of pupils of African and Caribbean origin, who are six times more likely to be expelled than their white peers.





Lisa Hepi at the Roman grave where she helped discover an ancient board game PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Archaeologists puzzle over next move

IT MAY not be as clever as chess, as sadistic as Monopoly or as pointless as Patience, but a Roman board game discovered intact in a gravel pit in Colchester, Essex last week may go down as the longest game of anything ever played, *writes John Duncan*. And it's likely to stay that way because the rules are not in the box.

The game, thought to be a version of a Roman board game called Soldiers, was discovered in a dig on a burial site by members of the Colchester Archaeological Trust. The pieces were intact, with the first two moves already apparently made.

That at least was the theory: the archaeologists had painstakingly reconstructed a diagram of what they had found, looking like a cross between draughts and tiddlywinks. Unfortunately they then found another glass counter, wrecking theories that certain squares had been deliberately left blank as part of a clever opening strategy.

The game was sealed in the traditional tomb for dignitaries of the time for the deceased to amuse himself in the afterlife, according to some; for him to play to get into heaven, say others.

Hume pleads for asylum seekers

James Meikle

CARDINAL Basil Hume, leader of Roman Catholics in England and Wales, last week said the Government should show "moral responsibility" by restoring some state aid to asylum seekers.

He said that voluntary and church groups trying to help up to 10,000 people stripped of their benefit and housing rights might not cope this winter. Britain's response to their plight would be a touchstone of its moral health.

The Government should devote part of the £400 million a year it may save through the curbs to prevent destitution and "acute social distress".

Cardinal Hume, opening a 50-bed night shelter in central London to which he is said to have made a "very generous personal donation", said the Government had a legitimate interest in ensuring fair and efficient procedures for genuine asylum seekers.

But such people, often blamed for being a burden on the state or taking others' jobs, were "a useful scapegoat for those who wish to appeal only to other people's self-interest or who promote a narrow nationalism".

The curbs apply to asylum seekers who fail to seek refugee status on arrival in this country or who are appealing against rejection of their applications.

But Cardinal Hume said even those granted refugee status were often surviving on income support and living in overcrowded accommodation. The need for the shelter was a grim omen, he said.

"I do believe the Government have a moral responsibility . . . to provide financial support to those voluntary organisations which are taking the strain."

By denying asylum seekers funds, the Government was denying them the chance to pursue legal claims.

He and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, had met the Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, in January and had warned him of the "grave misgivings" about the effects of the changes, which were first introduced in February.

Voluntary groups say that a crisis is approaching, especially since emergency legislation in July put the policy on a legal basis following an Appeal Court ruling in June that the initial benefit cuts were illegal.

Increasing numbers are thought to be sleeping rough although most are still being offered shelter by people in their different communities. Some may wait three years for their cases to be determined.

The shelter, run by the Refugee Council, includes an advice centre, washing and laundry facilities, a medical centre, room for prayer, and English classes.

Several organisations and companies, including the building industry's charity, Crash, have helped provide the centre, which will cost nearly £400,000 a year to run. There is only enough cash at present to last until December.

The Department of Social Security said: "Genuine refugees currently not getting benefit but granted asylum will get benefits backdated. They can then pay the voluntary organisations and church groups who have been accommodating them."

Meanwhile voluntary organisations would have to take the strain. "If a church is convinced of an individual's case, they can be confident there will be money there at the end of the day," said the Social Security spokesman.

Lilley faces fresh fight over benefits

Alan Travis

THE High Court last week cleared the way for a new legal battle over a government decision to withdraw basic social security support from thousands of asylum seekers.

Mr Justice Popplewell gave permission to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) to bring a full High Court case against the decision of the Social Security Secretary, Peter Lilley, to use emergency legislation retrospectively to deny welfare benefits to up to 10,000 asylum seekers.

However, a spokesman for the Department of Social Security insisted that asylum seekers should not be allowed to keep what he described as "windfall gains". A fresh defeat for the Government could mean it faces a bill of millions of pounds in backdated benefit payments.

The High Court action, to be heard later this month, is also being brought as a test case on behalf of Miss T, a young Ethiopian woman who was tortured and raped by the security forces, and now faces being made homeless in Britain.

The fresh legal challenge stems from a Court of Appeal victory on June 21 by the JCWI, which declared that Mr Lilley had acted illegally since February 5 by turning down all social security claims from asylum seekers who failed to seek refugee status on the day they arrived in Britain. The Appeal Court judges said Mr Lilley's policy "contemplates a life so destitute that no civilised nation can tolerate it".

Pope backs Ulster peace hopes

David Sharrock

THE Pope threw his weight behind the search for peace in Northern Ireland when he called for courage from those involved in the all-party talks, which resumed at Stormont on Monday after a summer of sectarian conflict.

Pope John Paul told pilgrims after his regular Sunday angelus address at his summer residence south of Rome that the Protestant and Catholic communities both desired an end to violence.

"They have given proof that peace and reconciliation are possible if everyone has the courage to embrace the path of dialogue, mutual understanding, respect for the legitimate rights of each person and, above all, human rights." The Pope said he hoped political leaders would "pursue the true good of the beloved people of Northern Ireland".

The talks resumed at Stormont Castle in east Belfast amid gloomy forecasts: Protestants and Catholics appear more polarised by the events of this summer's marching season than for many years.

The Rev Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party and the non-sectarian Alliance Party have asked the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, to decide if the two small loyalist parties that represent the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association can remain at the negotiating table while a death threat hangs over a former UVF prisoner and Portadown hardliner, Billy Wright. Members of the Progressive Unionists and the Ulster Democratic Party have been urged to distance themselves from the warning by the Combined Loyalist Military Command to Mr Wright to get out of Northern Ireland.

Within minutes of the talks resuming Mr Paisley brought proceedings to a halt with a three-page indictment of the two parties, claiming they were in breach of the Mitchell principles of non-violence. He said he would not return to the table until the matter was resolved.

The talks were then adjourned by the chairman, the former US senator George Mitchell, so the British and Irish governments could consider the matter and decide if they should be allowed to stay.

The Democratic Unionists claim that unless the loyalist representatives dissociate themselves, they should be barred. The DUP is unlikely to take part in full discussions until the decision is taken.

Sir Patrick admitted at the weekend that the talks would be extremely difficult after Drumcree, where Orangemen staged a successful stand-off against the RUC. He also admitted there had been a lack of insight into the intensity of feeling on both sides at the time of the stand-off.

"Nobody committed to peace and to the rule of law can see those dire events as a victory," Sir Patrick said. "They were a defeat for the Province as a whole, for the democratic process and for all those who support and depend for their liberty upon the rule of law."

He admitted political progress had been "maddeningly slow" but said the resumed talks "are the only real game in town".

Comment, page 12

Armed to the teeth . . . Norma Major in Glasgow PHOTO MURDO MacLEOD

Stormin' Norma on the stump

THE secret weapon that is going to take out the Labour party had a moderately successful test-firing last week, *writes Erlend Clouston*.

Norma Major, aka Boudicca, amply showed Glaswegians she is capable of supplying the extra touch of laminate that could just enable her husband to wriggle through the next general election. A 100-second display outside, and moving through, the Hilton Hotel revealed the dark-suited mother of two to be an accomplished navigator of splayed-open revolving doors, and capable of holding an animated chat with the tartan-trewed chairman of the Scottish Conservatives, Sir Michael Hirst.

A party fundraising event in Scotland is not the ideal place to make your debut as the new First Lady; memories of Mary Queen of Scots and Margaret Thatcher have made the country a no-fly zone for pushy women.

Conscious of this, the biographer of Joan Sutherland offered only a mild extension of the traditional repertoire of the politician's consort. After her tête-à-tête with Sir Michael, and while her husband fielded questions about Iraq, the normally discreet Mrs Major overtly posed alone for a good 10 seconds, the lights from the photographers' flashguns glittering in her gobstopper-sized gold, or possibly gilt, earrings.

The theory behind the Stormin' Norma strategy is unimpeachable. Labour lost the last election as it attracted fewer female than male votes. If 54-year-old Mrs Major's natural homeliness can generate a sympathetic loyalty among the nation's mothers and shop assistants, Labour might be vanquished again.

Ire over sale of Defence housing

David Hencke

MICHAEL PORTILLO is to sell the Ministry of Defence's 58,000 homes for £1.6 billion to a consortium of Japanese-backed financiers and a bank whose chairman is the honorary treasurer of the Conservative party.

The deal was condemned by Labour's defence spokesman, David Clark, who believes it will bring rich pickings for the companies and land the taxpayer with a large bill in the long term.

The winning bid is the Annington Homes consortium, made up of the Japanese bank Nomura International, the Royal Bank of Scotland — whose chairman is Lord Younger of Prestwick, the former defence secretary, whose clients include the Conservative party — Hambros Bank — whose chairman is Lord Hambro, the Tory party treasurer — Midland Bank, Abbey National Treasury Services and the AMEC Group. It beat off a bid headed by John Beckwith, who is also chairman of the Premier Club, where members pay £100,000 a year for dinners with John Major.

Sources said the bulk of the finance involved would be arranged by the consortium's British partners.

Mr Clark said: "It is scandalous that the homes of servicemen are to be sold to line the pockets of Tory party donors. This is yet another example of sleazy deals from this government."

The MoD will lease back the properties from Annington Homes under a 200-year deal.

Some £100 million will be released from the sale to upgrade the homes, while 2,500 will be sold. More properties will be released over 25 years.

Sir Thomas Macpherson, a businessman and former soldier who has worked closely with the MoD, was recruited as chairman of the consortium.

EU summit underscores British isolation on union

John Palmer in Tralee

BRITAIN'S isolation over plans for closer political union in Europe will be laid bare next month at a special European Union summit.

EU foreign ministers meeting last week in Tralee, Ireland, agreed to step up preparations to produce a draft treaty on closer union by calling a summit of heads of government on October 5. This is two days before the Conservative party meets in Bournemouth, where Eurosceptics plan to reopen their campaign against British participation in the single currency and against any strengthening of the Maastricht treaty.

As he prepares to face a potentially stormy party conference debate, John Major is certain to resist all pressure at the Dublin summit for Britain to show a greater willingness to compromise.

Ireland's government, which holds the EU presidency, is confident it will have a complete new draft European treaty ready by the end of November.

"We are determined to get such a text ready in time for the normal European Union summit to be held in Dublin during December," the Irish foreign minister, Dick Spring, said. "It may have to include some important square brackets where there are deep disagreements, but it should offer serious options for the heads of government to consider."

The British government has rejected all attempts to get it to modify its opposition to any extension of majority voting by the EU Council of Ministers, any extension of the powers of the European Parliament and any weakening of the national veto. But the other 14 EU countries believe some reforms in the way decisions are taken are essential.

"I want to see progress made on all the issues we are considering in order to make the European Union more efficient, more open and more democratic," the commission president, Jacques Santer, said. "I hope we can create conditions for a political breakthrough in Dublin. I would remind you we have an EU now of 15 member states which was originally created for six. In the years ahead the EC will enlarge to 25 countries. There must be changes."

The Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, was remarkably upbeat about the prospects of a compromise on ways of strengthening Europe's common foreign and security policy, and even on the agreement of a common line on defence. He denied that recent disagreements among EU governments about US missile attacks on Iraq showed consensus was impossible.

Michael White adds: A group of Britain's most senior industrialists last week stepped in to the vicious Tory dispute over Europe to warn that outright rejection of a single currency would be "deeply damaging" to jobs and export prospects.

With so many aspects of proposed monetary union unresolved as the 1999 deadline approaches, "leaving an empty chair at the table would mean that British interests would be unrepresented as crucial decisions were taken," the 15 executives warned in a letter to the Financial Times.

"Such a gesture of far from splendid isolation could leave British firms at a competitive disadvantage for years to come — whether or not Britain eventually chose to join.

The mixture of chairmen and chief executives of companies boasting "billions of dollars of export business and creating tens of thousands of jobs in this country" is led by Tony Hales, head of Allied Domecq, the drinks group, and includes such giants as BAT, British Aerospace, BP, Bupa, Coopers and Lybrand, Glaxo-Wellcome, Guinness, Unigate, Unilever and Vauxhall.

In coming off the fence in a debate which could tear the Conservatives apart before the election, the industrialists have sided decisively with the Clarke-Heseltine wing of the Cabinet, which wants to keep options open — as do Tony Blair and his team.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Union anger at no-strike proposal

Seumas Milne

TENSIONS between the trade unions and the Labour party spilled over on the eve of this week's TUC conference, as trade union leaders poured scorn on leaked Labour plans to curb public sector strikes and TUC officials sought to paper over divisions around the level of a future minimum wage.

Labour's education and employment spokesman, David Blunkett, is floating a proposal for no-strike, binding arbitration agreements for public service workers.

But although some union leaders welcomed a debate about how to preserve industrial peace, any arbitration scheme — regarded as an attempt to defuse the Conservatives' threats to introduce new union controls in the wake of this summer's strikes — has been dismissed as unworkable.

The likelihood that the TUC will also vote to demand a £4.26 per hour minimum wage in the first year of a Labour government, along with a more Labour-friendly call for £4-plus with a final TUC target figure to be left until after the election, was meanwhile gleefully seized on by Tory ministers.

As the Conservative party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, claimed that the proposed legal minimum wage of £4.26 would cost a million jobs, the Unison leader, Rodney Bickerstaffe, said this was the very amount an hour MP's had voted themselves as an increase earlier this year. "I'm not knocking their increase. All I'm saying is you cannot vote through an increase of £9,000 a year and then say to the poorest workers in the country you cannot accept for your full year's work as much as we have got as an increase. It's double standards," he said.

A Unison-National Union of Mineworkers motion for £4.26 was expected to be passed when the issue is debated on Wednesday.

John Monks, TUC general secretary, was defeated over the issue by 19 votes to 15 on the TUC General Council last week. But he and other union leaders who regard specifying £4.26 as a tactical mistake were taking heart from the support for a General Council statement and a GMB general union motion, which they said would take precedence.

That aims to kick the issue into touch as a Tory electoral weapon by deferring an exact figure, while applying pressure on Labour to raise its sights towards something close to £4.

Labour has in any case made clear it will leave the entire issue to a Low Pay Commission. But, with continuing strikes throughout the public sector and the Tories determined to make them an election issue, Mr Blunkett's intervention may be more difficult to handle.

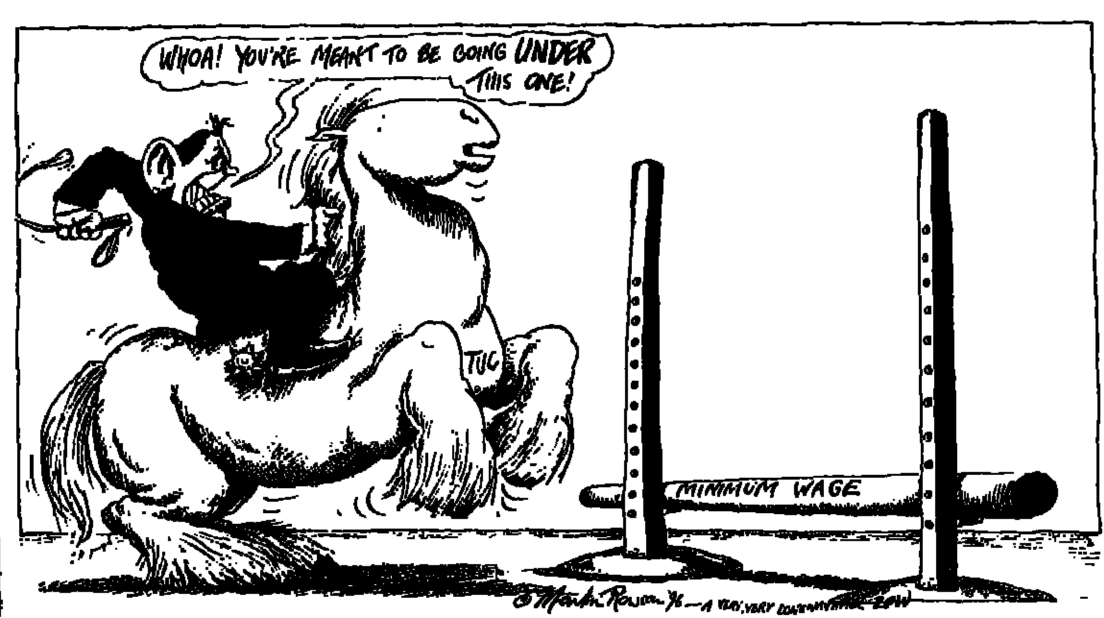
He said that he wanted to "set out the framework for a consultation process on how to find a way forward which seeks to resolve disputes rather than exacerbate them".

He is not proposing any system of compulsory binding arbitration which would take away the right to take industrial action. However, it is understood he will propose that public sector unions could be asked to sign voluntary agreements, which would replace the strike option with binding arbitration.

One union leader, the rightwing Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union general secretary, Ken Jackson, declared that strikes should become a thing of the past in the 21st century. Under a Labour government committed to social partnership, they could be replaced by "small fast-track Arbitration Appeal Units".

But he was an isolated voice. John Edmonds, GMB general secretary, said binding arbitration schemes for public sector workers was a "boomerang policy for any government", which would effectively be signing away its control of public sector pay.

Class war, page 19



In Brief

MATTHEW HARDING, the multi-millionaire co-owner of John Major's favourite football club, Chelsea, became Labour's biggest individual donor when he gave the party £1 million.

PLANS for Europe's tallest building — the 420m London Millennium Tower — were unveiled by the architect Sir Norman Foster. He said the 92-storey tower "will provide a landmark statement of the City of London's pre-eminence as Europe's financial capital".
Comment, page 12

THE MANAGEMENT of Scotland's principal women's prison, Cornton Vale, has come under renewed scrutiny after the suicide of a fifth prisoner there in the past 15 months.

ACTRESS Helen Mirren picked up her first Emmy award during another successful night for Britain at America's premier television awards ceremony. She was named best lead actress for her role as a police inspector in Prime Suspect. Alan Rickman took the award for best male actor for his role in Rasputin.

OWNERS of at least 90 Spanish fishing boats have launched a multi-million pound claim for compensation from the British government in the High Court, claiming their boats were unlawfully excluded from British waters.

ANNE BEVERLEY, aged 58, the mother of the Sex Pistols guitarist Sid Vicious, has been found dead from a suspected drugs overdose.

A LARGE expansion in the use of informants paid £70 for every arrest lies behind reductions in household burglaries in some police force areas, according to the Audit Commission.

ROY THOMASON, a Tory backbencher whose business ran up debts of £6 million, said he was reconsidering his position after being effectively deselected by his local party.

CRICKETER Ian Botham is to appeal and seek a retrial after losing his 13-day libel case against Imran Khan in July, his lawyer said. Botham, who with fellow cricketer Allan Lamb sought damages against the former Pakistan captain, is appealing on the grounds that the jury was misdirected.

THE Political Animal Lobby, which has donated £1 million to Labour, has asked for it to be pointed out that it is not the British arm of the International Fund For Animal Welfare, as reported last week. "We are a sister organisation with the same principles as IFAW, but we are separately funded," said Nick Jenkins of PAL.

Boy questions parents' right to beat him

Clare Dyer

THE mother of a 12-year-old boy who is challenging parents' right to use corporal punishment at the European Commission of Human Rights in Strasbourg claimed that he was totally out of control.

The boy, who cannot be named for legal reasons, claims a beating with a garden cane by his stepfather when he was nine was "inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", contravening the European Convention on Human Rights.

The boy has been given the right to pursue his case at the European Court of Human Rights. A court ruling could lay down the parameters for the circumstances in which corporal punishment would be permitted and limit parents' rights to discipline their children by beating them. The boy's stepfather was prosecuted for assault occasioning actual bodily harm but the jury acquitted him.

The mother-of-five said: "I have had problems with him ever since he was two." She had lost count of the number of times she had been called to the boy's school because of his disruptive behaviour. On the occasion his stepfather beat him he was trying to stab one of the other children with a knife, she added.

The Department of Health will argue that parents have a right to administer reasonable chastisement.

Howard rapped by EU court over lifers

Alan Travis

MICHAEL HOWARD has suffered another defeat in European Union courts — this time over the rights of prisoners.

Last week's ruling by an arm of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg said the Home Secretary had violated the rights of discretionary life sentence prisoners by making them wait two years between each official review of their possible release date.

Penal reformers said the judgment by the Committee of Ministers was a "powerful indicator" of how the European Court will eventually view the case of the two boys convicted of killing Liverpool toddler Jamie Bulger, regarding the way their sentences have been fixed.

The ruling involved an inmate convicted of manslaughter for killing his mother, and follows a similar ruling in 1990 which said that discretionary life sentence prisoners had a right to have their sentence reviewed once their initial "tariff" expired.

Discretionary life prisoners are those who have been convicted of serious offences short of murder, including manslaughter, arson and rape. The Strasbourg court ruled that Mr Howard had left it too long to introduce the new review system for discretionary lifers, and that the two-year interval between reviews laid down by the 1991 Criminal Justice Act was also too long.

● A High Court judge has given the go-ahead for a new legal battle over early release for prisoners who spend time in custody before trial. It follows a High Court ruling backing a decision by Mr Howard, that prisoners serving consecutive sentences should have time remanded in custody subtracted just once, rather than from each sentence.

The latest case centres on the way release dates are calculated for prisoners serving concurrent sentences. Two prisoners claim they are being wrongly held, and are pressing for the case to be heard this month.

While backing Mr Howard's method of treating remands in custody in consecutive sentence cases, Lord Justice Simon Brown cast doubt on the method used for concurrent sentences. He said the law was ambiguous, and called for legislation to clarify it.

Prisoner's big squeeze saves choking jailer

IT MAY be rare for someone who has taken a life to have the opportunity to save one, but a former miner sentenced to life for murder has made the most of his chance, *writes Duncan Campbell.*

Welshman Terence Hughes was being supervised by prison officer Michael Bugg at a hostel in Nottingham prison when he noticed that all was not well with the jailer.

The officer had staggered, apparently unable to breathe, into the room where Mr Hughes was watching television. As a miner, Mr Hughes had learned about first aid on the outside, and realised Mr Bugg might have been about to choke to death.

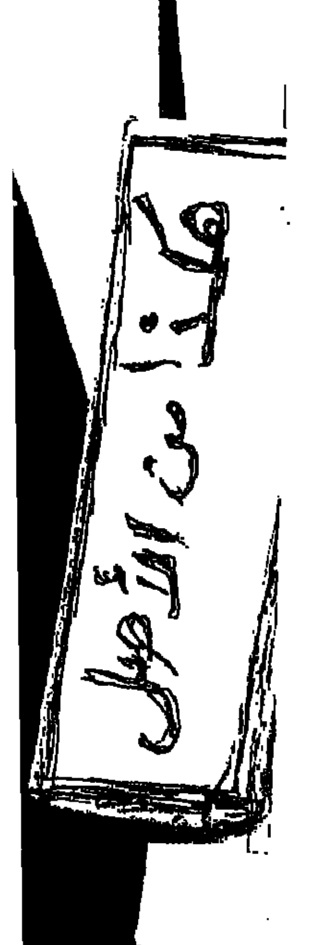
Mr Bugg, aged 51, of Toton, Nottinghamshire, said he had been eating an orange when the telephone rang, and he had tried to swallow a whole segment before answering. But the orange stuck in his windpipe. At first, Mr Hughes thought that Mr Bugg was playing a joke. Once he realised Mr Bugg could not breathe, he sprang into action.

Mr Bugg could barely express his gratitude, and in different circumstances, might have said he was "choked".

"I would not be here today if it hadn't been for him," he said. "I thank this man from the bottom of my heart.

"He rushed to help me and slapped me hard on the back. When this failed, he grabbed me from behind and performed Heimlich's manoeuvre — squeezing my chest very hard.

"When the orange shot down into my stomach, it was like a champagne cork popping. The first thing I said to him was 'Thank God you were here'."



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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'I am here for Christ' . . . The Rev Paul Williamson takes his case against the Queen to the Appeal Court PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MOORE

Rebel vicar takes on Queen

A CHURCH of England vicar was told by judges last week to drop his "untenable, unsustainable" claim that the Queen had broken her coronation oath by allowing the ordination of women as priests, *writes James Meikle.*

The Rev Paul Williamson, who argued the Queen was unlawfully led into agreeing the Church's "theological heresy", was warned that his submissions to the High Court were full of "legal heresies". Lord Justice Simon Brown and two other judges in the Court of Appeal all agreed that the arguments of the "sincere and determined" cleric were "hopeless" and should be abandoned.

Mr Williamson said afterwards: "I shall not take the slightest bit of notice. They can clap me in irons. I am here for Christ, not their silly witterings." He intended to pursue his case to the House of Lords and the European Court if necessary.

Mr Williamson argued that the "politically correct" decision by the Church of England had flouted ecclesiastical law. The Church had used a "wretched piffling" canon to introduce women priests with the agreement of Parliament, but it was legally impossible for the Queen to agree to any measure that breached her oath to "preserve inviolably" Church doctrine.

Tony Blair has stumbled on the rocky road to decentralisation, says **Michael White**

Labour falters on devolution

"THE trouble with devolving government in Britain", the Tory policy guru, David Willetts, once noted, "is that England is the wrong size." By that he meant it is too big to sit easily in a federal system with regional government in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Unlike Germany or Spain, few English regions have sufficient local identity to allow readily for eight or 10 regional assemblies to match those demanded, at least by the political classes, on the Celtic fringe. It has not stopped efforts to decentralise the modern British state almost since the enforced union with Ireland in 1800 came a century after the more-or-less voluntary Act of Union between England and Scotland in 1707.

With Labour in turmoil over its Scottish devolution plans once again, there is also trouble simmering in Wales, where Tony Blair's insistence on proportional representation for a Cardiff assembly has stirred resentment among Labour MPs in the valleys, who fear it will give Plaid Cymru disproportionate power.

It is *déjà vu.* Home Rule for Ireland wrecked Gladstone's last government in the 1880s; but for the first world war, it might have wrecked Asquith's in 1914 after Protestant Ulster threatened a rebellion. Instead, the IRA emerged from the blood of the 1916 Easter Rising.

In Scotland, nationalism has been a reviving force since the prestige of the imperial British state collapsed after the second world war.

Ironically, the immediate damage inflicted on Labour stems from John Major's appointment of the Thatcherite Michael Forsyth as Scottish Secretary in 1994 after a series of conciliatory grandees. Forsyth backed symbolic gestures, such as the return of the Stone of Scone to placate the Scots. But he also opened up against Labour's devolution plans, which had been honed in a multiparty Constitutional Convention since 1991. With Liberal Democrat and Scottish TUC support — the Scottish Nationalist Party walked out and the Tories never joined in — they produced a model for an assembly which would have tax-raising powers and proportional representation, unlike the model the last Labour government failed to impose.

John Smith, the former Labour leader, had been happier with this consensus than Tony Blair. When the wily Forsyth started saying the "tartan tax" would cost Scots up to 3p in the £1, and hit jobs and inward investment, Mr Blair and his shadow Scottish secretary, George Robertson, instituted a review. The result was the June 26 announcement that before a Blair government legislates to create an assembly it would seek a majority of Scottish voters in a two-question referendum: do they want an assembly; should it have tax-raising powers?

It is hard to convey the anger this U-turn created among nationalists, Liberal Democrats and nationalistic Labour activists.

The theory was that a referendum win would legitimise the proposed assemblies and make it harder for Tories to filibuster in Parliament as they did from 1976-79. What infuriated pro-devolutionists was the suspicion that Mr Blair was really inviting Scots voters to say No to tax-raising powers, which Mr Robertson had wanted precisely because it would instill responsibility into an assembly. Without them, he reasoned, the SNP could accuse London of keeping Scotland short of cash even though — as John Major said again in Glasgow last week — the Treasury gave "over £17 more per person per week" to support public services in Scotland than in England.

It might not under devolution, if Scots MPs continued to keep voting powers over England's affairs, as in the famous West Lothian riddle posed in 1976 by the anti-devolutionist Tam Dalyell. Why should West Lothian's MP be able to vote on West Bromwich's schools and not vice versa, he asked.

It is hard to have a semi-federal system and in 17 years of opposition Labour has managed to refine the problem, but not solve it.

The latest U-turn, which brought Tory and SNP jeers, reflects tactical manoeuvres to minimise Labour as a Tory target.

Labour's Scottish executive, split over the June 26 change as is the whole Scottish party, voted on August 31 to back the two-part referendum, but only if voters were offered another referendum before the Edinburgh assembly actually raised (or lowered) the Scots tax rate.

Touring Scotland last week Mr Robertson found no support for this compromise. So, he revealed, he persuaded Mr Blair to drop it.

Comment, page 12

Blair faces scorn over tax switch

THE Labour leader, Tony Blair, at the weekend backed his embattled Scottish spokesman, George Robertson, in the face of anger, ridicule and resignation calls that followed abandonment of a devolution policy which was just six days old.

Less than a week after Labour's divided Scottish executive endorsed Mr Blair's two-question referendum plan, Mr Robertson revealed that he wanted to drop the idea of a second referendum on the tax issue, which had been appended to clinch last week's majority.

The U-turn is the third devolution policy refinement in just over two months, and stunned Labour activists north of the border.

Relief at the ditching of the almost universally derided second referendum was matched by fury at the evidence of Walworth Road's contempt for the rulings of its Scottish executive.

Senior ministers, including the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, and the Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, who renewed calls for Mr Robertson's dismissal at a Tory "rally for the union" in Perth on Monday, were joined in their condemnation by scornful Scottish Nationalists and dismayed Liberal Democrats.

Mr Robertson, who saw Labour's poll rating in Scotland slip to 48 per cent and the SNP's rise nine points to 29 per cent last week, said the latest move was not a change in policy, only "a change in tactics" designed to rid the party of an idea that commanded little or no support.

Record haul of rhino horns

Duncan Campbell

POLICE last week seized what was believed to be a world record haul of rhino horn. Environmentalists said it showed that London was the centre of a worldwide market in the illegal trade.

A total of 105 horns, weighing 240 kilograms and valued at £2.8 million, were seized at a mews garage in Kensington, west London, by officers from the South-East regional crime squad. The horn is prized in the Far East for its medicinal and alleged aphrodisiac properties.

Two men and two women from Cambridgeshire were questioned after the swoop. Rhinos are an endangered species and trade in the horn has been illegal since 1985. One of the women was later released.

The police worked on the month-long investigation with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. An RSPCA spokeswoman said the haul represented more than 1 per cent of the white rhino population.

Diplomat in jail for porn

Elizabeth Pickering

A DIPLOMAT convicted of smuggling child pornography videos into Britain was sentenced to three years in prison at Southwark crown court in London last week.

More than 100 pornographic videos belonging to Robert Coghlan, formerly press attaché to the British embassy in Japan, were seized by Customs in March. Most of them, found at an Essex depot, featured abuse of young boys. The diplomat intended to take the material with him to his next post, in Madrid, where he would have enjoyed diplomatic immunity.

Judge Gerald Butler, QC, told Coghlan: "I am satisfied beyond doubt that you always knew that large numbers of these video cassettes involved the exploitation, abuse and degradation of children."

Russell Huston, Coghlan's counsel, objected to a suggestion made outside court by Jim McGregor, deputy chief investigator for Customs, that the haul was connected to an organised pornography ring. Mr McGregor later said: "It was an exceptionally large number of paedophile videos for anybody to have."

Justice on trial after rape victim's ordeal

Sue Quinn

VICTIM support groups and women's organisations last week called for a review of the way rape trials are conducted after a Japanese student was forced to spend 31 hours in the witness box reliving her ordeal, which ended with her attackers receiving jail sentences of up to 10 years.

The case, in which the victim was cross-examined by barristers representing each of her five attackers over a record 12 days, prompted calls for the Bar Council to introduce new procedures to eliminate unnecessary, repetitive and traumatic questioning in rape trials.

The young men received sentences of between 30 months and 10 years for the "brutal" gang rape of the 20-year-old woman over two days. Judge Graham Boal told them at the Old Bailey: "To say you behaved like animals would do an injustice to the animal kingdom. Quite how a human being treats someone as you treated her almost defies belief."

The woman, fearful of causing distress to her Japanese family, chose to go through the trial alone.

Afterwards, a spokeswoman for Victim Support, Helen Peggs, said the case highlighted the need for limits to be placed on the length of questioning and the type of questions asked of rape victims.

"There must be a way of ensuring that if duplication happens, it really is necessary. Otherwise the end product will be that witnesses are so distressed they are unable to give evidence.

"The defendants have rights, of course, but you can't have a fair trial if the witness can't cope with the way the trial is conducted."

The vice-president of the National Council of Women, Tobe Aleksander, said: "We have to ensure the defendant gets a fair trial as well as ensuring that women aren't put off coming forward."

At the conclusion of the trial, the ringleader of the gang, 16-year-old Gerrard Molloy, was given two 10-year sentences for double rape, two six-year terms for aiding and abetting others to rape the student, and four years for three indecent assaults, all to run concurrently.

Judge Boal told the attackers: "For over 30 hours this girl had to relive the ordeal in a public court and in front of total strangers. Outrageous suggestions were put to her on your instructions. You, not your counsel, added insult to injury and heaped further humiliation on her."

With one exception, none had expressed remorse.

The five others jailed, all from south London, were Jason Baksh, aged 18; Aynton Waite, 20; Roger Leslie, 19; Mark Baksh, 23; and Anthony Baksh, 15.

Ulster's dialogue of the deaf

A POLL published in Dublin this week found that 63 per cent of the Northern Ireland population believe that the province's talks process will end in failure. Pretty realistic stuff, one might think. In some respects the more surprising finding was that as many as 32 per cent thought they would succeed. But 24 hours after the poll's publication, even that now seems like reckless optimism.

While the talks were in abeyance for the summer it was possible for their absence to breed illusion. It was conceivable that July's sectarian pettiness might be be put to one side when the participants reconvened this week. Hints over the weekend that the two main parties, the Ulster Unionists and the nationalist SDLP, had reached important procedural agreements also encouraged a marginally less pessimistic perspective. It was possible, just about, to persuade oneself that there might now be a consensus for a fresh start. But such illusions evaporated when the parties came back on Monday.

What happened at Stormont gives cause only for gloomy realism. The early break-up of the session — the talks got bogged down within minutes — offered a clear signal that the Democratic Unionists are set on a long-term disruptive approach which the other parties do not know how to counter. After recent loyalist death threats, the DUP's Ian Paisley wants to exclude the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) from the talks (both parties are, in the jargon, close to the loyalist paramilitaries). On Monday he delivered his ultimatum and then left for Canada. Not much sign of give-and-take there.

But then give-and-take has never been Mr Paisley's game. He is an exclusive, not an inclusive politician. He wants to marginalise the paramilitaries, partly because they threaten his votes, but mainly because his real target is Sinn Fein. If he can get the PUP and UDP out, Mr Paisley believes, it will be much harder for the British and Irish governments to finesse Gerry Adams into the process on the back of some sort of ceasefire.

It is a mark of the bankruptcy of the current process that Mr Paisley should even bother to make such a suggestion. For there is not a shred of evidence that the two governments (especially the British) have either the intention or the ability to achieve such an objective. Even if they did, the mood in Ulster is clearly hostile as well as pessimistic. The Ulster Unionists' leader, David Trimble, made clear last week that he would not accept a referendum vote on Ulster's future if he did not agree with it. Mr Paisley can be counted on to adopt an equally defiant approach. The opportunities opened by the peace process have all but closed, an outcome for which all the protagonists must share responsibility. It is good of Senator Mitchell to commit himself to stay on as chairman of the talks, but there is little sign that there is now a serious job for him to do.

Tony Blair's tartan U-turn

IN POLITICS as in business there are times to cut your losses. Such a moment has arrived for the Labour party in Scotland. Its plan to hold not one but two referendums on devolution got more laughs than any stand-up comic on the Edinburgh Fringe; but it was laughter of the wrong sort, laced with justifiable derision. If Labour fell into so disastrous a muddle in Opposition, people asked, what on earth would it do in government? In Glasgow last week the Prime Minister had sport with what he called a "steeplechase" of stupidity, and the Nationalists were able to contrast the simplicity of their message of independence in Europe with the now ludicrously extensive set of fences over which a Home Rule Bill, until recently simply dependent on a Labour electoral victory, would be made to jump. More ominously, the SNP are moving up in the opinion polls and are four points short of their historic high point — the second election of 1974 when they took 33 per cent of the vote in Scotland and 11 seats.

Labour's support for devolution has always contained a large element of pragmatism: above all, it is *designed* to stop the Nationalists in the old industrial heartlands. But home rule within the Union is not a simple concept; were it so, then one of the many devolutionary proposals brought before Westminster since the 1890s would by now have succeeded.

Had the shadow Scottish Secretary, George Robertson, simply faced down the criticism that greeted the announcement of the first referendum, the disillusion felt by Labour's partners in the Scottish Constitutional Convention would have been manageable. It is hard to dispute the principle that an important constitutional change should receive direct popular endorsement. Mr Robertson was rattled in the first place by Tory attacks on the "tartan tax" which the Government asserts will flow from a tax-raising Scottish parliament and in the second by recriminations about a diluted commitment from within the broad devolutionary camp and the nationalist wing of his own party.

The result was the curious fudge of a second referendum. Devolution may be designed to head off nationalist sentiment, but there are better reasons why Parliament should support it. A Scottish parliament will not only give Scotland a chance to express its distinctive values within the Union, but will address a real democratic deficit in Scotland, ruled by an oligarchy of quangos loaded with government sympathisers. The powerful Labour regions have been dismembered in a reform of local government imposed without consultation in the most squalid traditions of gerrymandering. Scottish devolution is a trail-blazer for more general constitutional change. The most immediate consequence is that the number of Scottish MPs at Westminster will have to be reconsidered, as will the place of the Scottish Secretary in the Cabinet. Labour's acceptance of proportional representation for a Scottish parliament makes it harder for it to resist its application at UK level, and the principle that decision-making should be brought near to the people it affects is ostensibly endorsed even by the Tory Europhobes.

If Labour's muddle in Scotland has been risible, the cynicism of the Tory tactics is scarcely less so. Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth puts on the kilt for the premiere of Braveheart and persuades the Queen to return the Stone of Destiny to Scotland. He and the Prime Minister talk up nationalism, praising its clarity. This is a masquerade. Their real purpose is to split the opposition vote, and a small Tory recovery along with the SNP rise in the polls suggests that the tactic is having some slight success. Labour has given them further ammunition. It is now in the throes of ditching its commitment to a second referendum. It can't be discarded too quickly. Better a short season of comedy than a long-running farce.

Reach for the sky

SCEPTICS will say it confirms only one fact: Britain's membership of the Third World. Plans were unveiled this week for Britain's biggest skyscraper. The proposed 420m Millennium Tower on the site of London's Baltic Exchange would be Europe's tallest building and even 4.5m higher than New York's Empire State. Certainly the dimensions of the new project signal the same sense of desperation which surrounded Malaysia's successful bid to build the world's tallest building in Kuala Lumpur. Millennium Tower will still fall 84m short of Kuala Lumpur's Petronas Towers but will be twice as high as the City's current highest building, NatWest Tower, and half as tall again as Docklands' Canary Wharf. It will ensure that Britain jumps ahead again of Germany, currently completing a 300m tower in Frankfurt, which may be juvenile but then no one can accuse Germany of Third World status.

Ideally there should be no skyscrapers in central London, not because they are nasty but because Europe's historic cities should not need to imitate America. Paris demonstrates the success of rigorous planning rules which push all high-rise buildings to the periphery. Life is much more civilised there, living among architecture of a human scale. But central London already has skyscrapers so it would be perverse to rule out another one. Sir Norman Foster is one of Britain's most creative architects, so people cannot quibble about the quality of the proposed building. The existing surplus of 280,000 square metres of London office space raises a more pertinent question. But then, as a member of the Council of Tall Buildings, the body which adjudicates on various international construction claims, has noted: "Extra tall skyscrapers are not a matter of economics or population density, it's basically ego."

Danger lurks in the drive for food profits

John Gray

BY CHRISTMAS most of the processed foods we buy in supermarkets will contain soya bean that has been genetically altered.

In several parts of the world research is being undertaken on transplantation to humans of organs that have been taken from genetically manipulated animals. Many of the detergents, sprays and pesticides that we use in our homes and gardens contain synthetic chemicals that, according to some scientists, can disrupt human hormonal balance and may be implicated in the decline of male fertility. In these and innumerable other ways scientific and technological advances are being used to remodel the natural world to suit human needs. In using science in these ways, we are creating for ourselves an environment that has never before existed, and whose dangers are incalcuable. Governments, and some scientists, tell us that it is to science that we must turn for an assessment of the risks we are running, and how to limit them.

The history of the crisis surrounding BSE ("mad cow disease") should have taught us that such reassurances are not worth much. A few months ago there was much talk by government ministers of turning to "the science" to tell us what the risks are and how best to control them. The clear implication was that if only we rely on "the science" then we will be safe. In part, this was a routine political cop-out. At the same time, this kind of public discourse reflects a cardinal fact of life in late modern Britain. For most people nowadays science is the only institution that possesses anything akin to authority.

People turn to science for what religions no longer supply — a sense of certainty. Much of the power of science in late modern cultures comes from the fact that, unlike the churches, it operates an effective system of censorship against heretics, and is not riven constantly by public schisms.

The certainty which people seek in science is, of course, an illusion. On many of the issues that worry people today there is no scientific consensus. Claims that synthetic chemicals contribute to declining sperm levels are strongly contested. Scientific estimates of the risks of global warming vary widely. No doubt some of the differences among scientists about the nature and magnitude of current environmental risks arise from rivalries among pressure groups and from the power of vested interests.

The real source of scientific uncertainty in many of these matters, however, is the novelty of our present condition. There has been an explosive growth of scientific knowledge about genetics over the past generation; but no one knows what will be the effects of introducing genetically engineered plants or animals into natural environments. A great deal has been learnt about viruses and the immune system since the emergence of Aids; but the consequences of transplanting the organs of pigs into human beings remain unknown. In forging ahead with such experiments we are taking risks — with human health, the wellbeing of other animal species and the environment — about which science can, at present, tell us very little. We need basic scientific research — at present badly underfunded in Britain — to identify emerging dangers to the environment. We are, in effect, turning the planet — and our own everyday lives — into the site of vast unsupervised scientific experiments, whose risks we can know, if at all, only retrospectively.

In this unprecedented situation we would be wise to consider adopting a precautionary approach to environmental dangers. We should be willing to forgo promising technological innovations if they carry catastrophic risks, even if current scientific knowledge suggests that the probability of disaster is low. We should put the responsibility on those who manufacture new environmental risks, and thereby shift the initiative to their potential and actual victims.

Applying a principle of this sort entails an enormous departure from present practice. It can easily be caricatured as a new form of Luddism. It involves huge changes in industries in which intensive methods are currently driven by the imperatives of commercial survival. It shifts the assessment of risk from being the exclusive prerogative of scientific expertise to being a matter for the ethical and political judgments of lay people. If it could be made politically palatable — a very tall order in a culture sustained by the faith that there are technical fixes for all human ills — a precautionary approach to new technologies might safeguard us against many of the dangers we are at present confronting.

MANY emerging hazards to human health and the environment come from interactions among new technologies that, taken in isolation from one another, seem reasonably safe. New biotechnologies are defended on the ground that genetically engineered crops will need fewer pesticides and chemical fertilizers. We cannot know, though, how new forms of life that appear safe in laboratory tests will react when they are released — irreversibly — into the wider world. Their interactions with their natural counterparts and with synthetic chemicals already in the environment will be largely unpredictable. Adopting a precautionary approach to genetic engineering and other technologies could protect us against many dangers.

But not, perhaps, against some of the worst risks. Amongst the many factors contributing to the BSE crisis, the feeding of an herbivorous species with animal protein rendered from the same species stands out starkly. There can be few clearer expressions of the modern view of the Earth as a resource to be exploited for the benefit of humans. A society in which the feeding of cow-remains to other cows can pass almost unnoticed until disaster strikes is one in which the very idea of nature is all but dead. No improvement in the calculus of risks is likely to protect a culture in the grip of scientific and technological hubris from further environmental catastrophes.

France draws a line in the sand over Iraq

Mouna Naïm

JUST as France had no hesitation in disagreeing with the United States over the Israeli "Grapes of Wrath" operation in southern Lebanon last April, or in adopting a measured stance at the Sharm el-Sheikh "anti-terrorist" summit in March, the French government made it quite clear, on September 3, that it did not approve the US air strikes against Iraq.

Paris, which has done its best to pursue an independent Middle East policy ever since Jacques Chirac became president, quickly saw that here was another golden opportunity to be its own master, particularly since the US seemed to be on shaky legal ground in acting as it did.

Officially, Paris did no more than express, through the Quai d'Orsay, its "concern" at developments in the situation in Iraq after the US launched Tomahawk cruise missiles against targets in the south of the country.

The French used diplomatically restrained language because they are extremely reluctant to give the impression they are dissociating themselves from a valued ally, given that they too are highly critical of the regime of Saddam Hussein.

But Paris, which has done its best for months to cajole Baghdad into respecting United Nations resolutions and played a far from negligible role in persuading Saddam to accept the so-called "oil for food" Resolution 986, would like Iraq to be able gradually to return to the international fold.

It holds that view not only because the embargo imposed by the UN more than six years ago has failed to topple Saddam and because the living conditions of the Iraqi people have steadily declined, but also because Paris, which had a special relationship with Baghdad before the Gulf war, would like to re-establish its position in the Middle East.

On the evening of September 2 the French foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, tried once again to make Saddam see reason. In a message to the Iraqi prime minister, Tariq Aziz, he urged that Baghdad "effectively withdraw the forces [it] had sent into the field".

France knew full well that once the Americans had engaged in a trial of strength with Saddam they would be forced — irrespective of the run-up to the presidential elections — to respond to Iraq's intervention in Kurdistan.

Even if Saddam had completely withdrawn his troops once the fighters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) had been repelled, his renewed alliance with its rival, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was going to give him a fresh toehold in Kurdistan. Washington felt it had to pick up the gauntlet.

France's decision to keep its distance from the US was made easier by the knowledge that the Arab countries, however hostile they may be to Saddam, are fed up with the US argument that the only language Saddam understands is the language of force and with its tendency to mete out punishment rather than try to solve problems. By September 3, the only Arab country that had approved the US action was Kuwait.

Nor do the reasons invoked by the US to justify its action against Iraq have any foundation in law. As the French government pointed out, Iraq did not violate any UN resolution by sending ground troops into Kurdistan, an area declared "a no-fly zone" and placed under the protection of a multinational force.

The UN Security Council's Resolution 688, the interpretation of which allowed the Western nations to set up that zone, makes no provision for military reprisal. The imposition of the no-fly zone, first north of the 36th parallel, then, in August 1992, south of the 32nd parallel, was in a sense a unilateral action. Now the US has decided to extend it in southern Iraq from the 32nd up to the 33rd parallel.

It is true that this will enable the Western allies to keep a closer eye on certain military sites located between the two parallels — and that kind of surveillance is vital given that Iraq consistently tries to hoodwink UN teams of inspectors.

However, the extension of the zone is not only a unilateral decision, but no longer takes into account the protection of the civilian population.

At the Sharm el-Sheikh summit, which President Bill Clinton and the then Israeli prime minister, Shimon Peres, wanted to turn into a virulent anti-terrorist forum that would guarantee the latter's re-election, Chirac pointed out that repression was not enough in itself and that the root of the problem would have to be dealt with.

In April, with even greater determination, France took advantage of chinks in US foreign policy tactics and managed to play a role in the negotiations that led up to a ceasefire in Lebanon.

De Charette broke new ground when he opted for a type of shuttle diplomacy that had previously been the sole prerogative of the Americans. France had the advantage of being able to present itself as a mediator, whereas the US had already approved the Israeli intervention in southern Lebanon.

Paris, too, was quick to condemn the slaughter by Israeli shells of more than 100 Lebanese civilians sheltering at a UN compound in southern Lebanon last May, whereas Washington was slow to react to the tragedy.

(September 5)

Media darling admits 'drink problem'

Benoît Peltier in Stockholm

THE woman politician who appeared on Swedish TV looking breathless, haggard and dry-mouthed was barely recognisable. Here was the darling of the Swedish media admitting, live, that she had a "drink problem" and "needed to go on a course of treatment". In less than 10 minutes of straight talking, 48-year-old Gudrun Schyman had put her political career on the line.

Schyman had a great deal to lose. She had energetically — and successfully — revamped the image of the former Swedish Communist Party, now called the Left Party: for months now, opinion polls have credited it with 12 per cent of voting intentions, which is double its score at the 1994 elections and puts it into third place nationally.

Her decision to come clean was all the riskier because Sweden is a country where people have a curious love-hate relationship with alcohol and where temperance societies are still active. She said she started drinking, "like everyone else", in her teens. But it had got to the point "where it couldn't go on any longer". She did not beat about the bush: "There are times when I lose all judgment."

Schyman will start a fortnight's course of treatment this week before, she hopes, resuming her activities as party president. It was the "stress" and "anxiety" generated by her job that had caused all the problems in the first place.

Why was she owning up now? "It's better for me to talk about it rather than being hounded by the press," she replied, aware no doubt that an evening paper was about to expose her fondness for the bottle.

Political reporters got wind of her problem some time ago, but the secret was well kept, perhaps because, as Schyman herself pointed out, "this is a problem that exists in all political parties, all companies and all newspapers".

Schyman is keen to stay on in her job. Although the Left Party's executive committee had since renewed its confidence in her, there is no knowing how voters, and in particular the party's rank and file, will react. Since becoming its leader three years ago — the party had just decided to stop calling itself "communist" — she has given it a new image that is more attractive to women and young people.

"Big Gudrun" — she is 1.80m-plus tall — is considered by some to be a bit of an opportunist: she appears on countless talk shows and once turned up at a rave event that had been banned by the police. But she has undoubtedly boosted her party's popularity.

Its resolutely anti-European Union, anti-nuclear, and now openly "feminist" stance has helped it to wean potential voters away from the ruling Social Democratic Party, whose sweeping cost-cutting programme has been far from popular. Schyman, a former social worker, hopes she will be heeded when she suggests that "political leaders should be allowed to be both strong and weak at the same time".

(September 4)

Mad cow crisis cuts beef prices to the bone

François Grosrichard

AS SUMMER draws to a close, the "mad cow" saga continues to exercise the minds of French beef farmers. The most urgent problem now facing them is what to do with their autumn bullocks. These animals, mainly breeds that are highly prized for their meat, such as Charolais, Salers and Aubrac, are born between November and January, put out to grass during spring and summer, and then sold mostly (80 per cent) to Italian farmers in the Po Valley, who fatten them on irrigated maize and slaughter them four to six months later.

That, at least, had been the traditional pattern of things in some 15 *départements* in Burgundy and the Massif Central until the BSE crisis broke in March. The Italians have virtually stopped buying any French beef animals, and it is hard to see when and under what conditions sales will pick up again.

St-Christophe-en-Brionnais, in the heart of Charolais country in the Saône-et-Loire *département*, has one of the oldest weekly cattle markets in France. Before dawn, hard bargaining between farmers, middlemen, wholesalers, buying groups and exporters sets guidelines for the day's prices. Volumes, prices, weights and the build of animals are subjected to close scrutiny by experts from the Interprofessional Office of Meat and Poultry Farmers (Ofival).

The Saône-et-Loire has more suckler cows (whose milk feeds calves that later grow into beef animals) than any other *département* in France. So the problem of what to do with its plethora of young bullocks is becoming an increasing headache.

"The crisis here has hit a sector that was already struggling," says the Saône-et-Loire prefect, Denis Prieur, who will shortly be getting almost 30 million francs ($6 million) to help farmers in particularly desperate straits. "Farmers have no room for manoeuvre in their dealings with buyers and slaughterers. Everyone tries to make a killing, and this has badly affected solidarity within the profession."

The scale of the problem can be judged from the way prices have moved at the St-Christophe-en-Brionnais market. On August 8 farmers were getting about 10 francs ($2) per kilo live weight for bullocks, as compared with 11.75 francs two months earlier, 15.25 francs on average in 1995 and 17 francs in 1994.

In other words, by mid-September, when farmers will no longer be able to hang on to animals that put on weight every day and, proportionally, decline in value, prices could well fall straight through the floor. In that case farmers are expected to take to the barricades.

"About 20 of us prefects are bracing ourselves but not panicking — we can hardly declare a state of emergency in our respective *départements*," says Prieur. "It will all depend on the credibility of decisions taken by France and the European Commission."

Under the proposed plan, some 300,000 animals, which represent 70,000 tonnes of meat and a third of overall French bullock production, will be slaughtered and stored at the European Union's expense.

"Europe will have to ensure that beef is the subject of a specific policy and not a by-product of the dairy industry," says Christian Decerle, a local farmers' trade union leader. "At present, 70 per cent of beef in the EU comes from dairy herds, and only 30 per cent from bullocks raised by suckler cows. That will have to change."

"Up until the end of June, we wanted to show the responsible, friendly side of trade union action by organising 'open days' at farms and promotional operations. Now we've had enough. Luckily we've got people who are prepared to stop and inspect lorries and open up supermarket cold stores.

"In early August we found Belgian cow meat in an Autun abattoir which had been through an abattoir in the next *département* and come out with a Charolais beef stamp on it. Our farmers are subjected to increasingly strict inspections while the big swindlers slip through the net."

Beef farmers hung the carcass of one of the Belgian cows on the railings of Mâcon prefecture while Prieur met the men who had just taken the law into their own hands. Meanwhile Decerle decided to put one ear of a bogus Charolais cow in his freezer just in case the public prosecutor found he was short of hard evidence.

(August 30)

African leaders play down Paris evictions

Thomas Sotinel in Bamako and Abidjan

WHEN the first batch of Malian immigrants evicted from St Bernard's Church in Paris a week ago arrived in the Malian capital, Bamako, a senior official said: "There is such a thing as public opinion here too, you know." That is something the French government does not seem to have taken on board.

The African media have given wide coverage to the way immigrants are treated in France, showing how they undergo repeated identity checks because of the colour of their skin, run into administrative barriers aimed at preventing families from being reunited, and risk collective deportation.

France's traditional "African vocation" may yet manage to survive such adverse publicity. But if it does, it will be thanks solely to the attitude adopted by the governments of French-speaking Africa. In the eyes of many ordinary Africans, France's image has been badly dented by the illegal immigrants affair.

French-speaking African states, which respect France's immigration laws and are keen not to jeopardise the allocation of French aid to their fragile economies, have always approached the problem of emigration to France from a purely technical standpoint. They themselves have large immigrant populations, and can understand France's action, even if the Ivorian government daily newspaper, Fraternité Matin, criticised the brutality used by police when they stormed St Bernard's Church.

And although the Malian president, Alpha Oumar Konaré, has strong reservations about the system of packing illegal immigrants on to chartered planes — "We feel it is a violation of our compatriots' dignity" — he has repeatedly said that candidates for emigration must obey the laws of their host countries.

Since Moussa Traoré was deposed in 1991, Mali has based its foreign policy on a delicate balance between loudly proclaimed independence and the need to maintain good relations with its former colonial overlord.

By diversifying its sources of aid as much as possible, Bamako tries to keep its distance from Paris whenever it feels necessary. When Jacques Chirac made his first visit to Africa as president in July 1995, Konaré refused to attend the regional meeting organised by France in Dakar, because he felt he had been summoned rather than invited there. France, however, remains Mali's biggest provider of aid, which amounted to $90 million last year.

As regards the St Bernard affair, Bamako would have preferred that the French authorities refrained from using force until it had completed a co-operation project aimed at encouraging people from the Kayes region, who make up the bulk of Malians living in France, to return to and settle in their region of origin. The visit to Mali by the French co-operation minister, Jacques Godfrain, on September 23 will be largely devoted to a presentation of the project.

Bamako had earlier sent its minister with special responsibility for Malians abroad to meet the St Bernard immigrants and try to convince them that they had not chosen the best method.



Riot police drag away one of the immigrants who took refuge in St Bernard's church PHOTO: GAEL CORNIER

Mali now feels its efforts have not been properly recognised by France, particularly after the French foreign minister, Hervé de Charette, claimed certain African countries were not doing enough to curb illegal emigration to France.

As for those Malians who have no desire to emigrate to France — the vast majority — the signal from Paris has been received loud and clear. They were glued to their radio and television sets as the illegal immigrant crisis unfolded, and saw its outcome as further proof of Mali's inability to influence France, a country much more powerful than theirs, and one that still believes it is entitled to play a dominant role in their daily lives.

Paris would like its former colonies to go on speaking French; but the number of black Africans who come to France to study is dwindling every year. The French authorities would also like them to stick to the rules of global neoliberalism — but only on condition that projects financed by French money are carried through by French companies.

Matters are not helped by the kind of problems faced by Africans wishing to come to France. One of Ivory Coast's most highly regarded academics admits that he can no longer look forward to visits to France without feeling apprehensive, because of the rebuffs he is likely to suffer from French immigration officials when he applies for a visa, and because of police identity checks during his stay.

Africans vote, too. Their leaders, as was shown recently in Benin, can be thrown out by the ballot box. In sub-Saharan Africa, emigration could well become a domestic political issue. If that happens, France cannot expect to remain protected for ever from a backlash that could extract a high price for what Africans regard at best as bad manners, and at worst as a form of apartheid that dare not speak its name.

(August 30 and September 3)

Hercule Poirot is needed back home

Jean de la Guérivière in Brussels asks why Belgian police seem so bad at solving crimes

AT THE time of his arrest on August 14, Marc Dutroux was no obscure Dr Jekyll whose apparent normality concealed a monstrous Mr Hyde; he was a convicted child rapist and, on top of that, a thief and a dealer in stolen cars who was well known to the authorities because several members of his gang were police informers.

The leniency he enjoyed and the impunity with which he was able to commit his crimes — he was released after serving only three years of a 13-year sentence for child abuse — have led to some speculation in Belgium that he was protected by paedophiles "in high places". But it would probably be a mistake to read villainy into decisions whose ineffectuality and incompetence were, in a sense, built into the Belgian legal system.

Although in many ways Belgium resembles a federal state, its legal system is not like that of the United States. Legal codes, procedures and sentencing practice are the same throughout the country. The person who takes ultimate responsibility is the justice minister. He is a member of the national government and has no counterparts in Belgium's various local governments.

As regards criminal cases which, like the Dutroux case, involve the whole of Belgian territory, matters are not made any simpler by the fact that a single examining magistrate has to match up investigations carried out in two different languages (French and Dutch).

But there is another ingredient that further complicates the issue: Belgium has no republican tradition of a centralised state. People have a strong sense of belonging to their city or province, and this can create fault lines even within the same linguistic community.

Co-operation between, for example, the authorities in Charleroi and Liège, cities whose parochialism is compounded by clan rivalries, left a great deal to be desired in the early stages of the Dutroux affair.

Several major crimes have in the past remained unsolved largely because initial investigations were greatly hindered by the running battle between Belgium's various police forces. In the eighties, a mysterious group known as the "Brabant killers" indiscriminately murdered several supermarket customers in the Brussels area. There was no apparent motive for the killings, and the culprits were never caught. It was conjectured that the aim might have been to destabilise Belgium, Nato's host country. But nothing was ever established — except the police's lack of professionalism.

The murder in Liège of the former deputy prime minister, André Cools, in 1991 gave rise to all sorts of theories. But the police never managed to catch the mysterious killer, who calmly shot the *éminence grise* of the Liège Socialist Party in a car park in front of the woman he lived with.

The determination shown by a handful of magistrates in elucidating recent corruption cases has partly restored the reputation of Belgium's judiciary. As the leading Catholic daily, La Libre Belgique, put it: "At a time when the revelation of those cases was deepening the ever-growing rift between public opinion and the political community, the law came to be seen as a haven of rectitude."

But with the Dutroux affair, the paper went on, "the legal system has been dealt a terrible snub, and unless it rapidly sends out clear and concrete signals, it may find it is attracting the same opprobrium that public opinion normally reserves for government and parliament".

Following the disappearance of several young people in Belgium over the past few years, the police not only failed to find the victims but, all too often, dismissed the fears of distraught parents, arguing that the persons concerned had probably run away from home, or that the need for professional secrecy prevented them from answering questions.

That explains why the Marc et Corine Association, founded by the parents of two murdered children, has proved such a nationwide success. The Dutroux affair has prompted thousands of Belgians to support the association, which for too long was alone in consoling families that had lost their loved ones.

If the government is worried about the tone of some of the petitions now in circulation, notably in favour of bringing back the death penalty, it has only itself to blame.

Dutroux's various "homes" are located in working-class areas of Wallonia, which has to a large extent been laid waste economically. Many of its inhabitants have to live off odd jobs or handouts.

IN AREAS such as that, it is not prudent to ask too many questions about what neighbours are up to, since everyone is in the same boat. Only now are locals beginning to talk, after long ignoring the excavations of the strange "electrician" Dutroux, who belonged to a Christian mutual insurance society.

The local police, on the other hand, might have asked themselves questions that did not occur to local residents, such as where Dutroux, a repeated offender, got the money from to buy so many "second homes".

But then Belgium's municipal police forces are often headed by people who were appointed because of their political affinities with local burgomasters (mayors), and who sometimes devote more of their time to political campaigning than they do to police work.

Dutroux is someone who paid no attention to the abstract "linguistic frontier" that separates Dutch-speaking Flanders from French-speaking Wallonia. He and an accomplice kidnapped the young An Marchal and Eefje Lambreks whose bodies were found on September 3 near Dutch-speaking Ostend in August 1995. An's parents, who attended the recent funeral of Julie Lejeune and Mélissa Russon, the eight-year-olds whose bodies were dug up last month, drew sympathetic applause from the French-speaking Walloon crowd.

The Belgians are aware of their country's fragility, and they somehow manage to hit on the right mood at ceremonies capable of bringing them together. In the view of a Brussels sociologist, King Baudouin's funeral in 1993 was that of the "father of the nation", while Julie and Mélissa's funeral was that of "the daughters of Belgium".

In times of national crisis, people tend to aspire to greater state intervention. That aspiration was reflected in the widespread (if unfair) criticism levelled at King Albert II when he failed to respond personally to appeals from victims' parents, and at the prime minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, when he decided not to cut short his holiday.

(September 1/2)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

U.S. Needs New Strategy in Middle East

Missile attacks are not enough to offset setbacks in Washington's war on Saddam, argues **Lally Weymouth**

WHEN Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait six years ago, President George Bush endeavored to forge an international coalition even as Washington developed a strategic plan to counter Saddam Hussein's aggression. Last week President Clinton, having observed Saddam's forces marching into northern Iraq — entering the U.S.-guaranteed "safe haven" for Iraqi Kurds — responded with unilateral missile strikes intended to disable Saddam's air defense system. In this undertaking, Washington enjoyed the support of only one U.S. ally — Great Britain — despite the fact that the United States was acting to enforce a 1991 U.N. resolution.

A key distinction between the Gulf War and the present hostilities turns on the fact that five years ago Turkey was a close U.S. ally. Indeed, one of the first calls Bush placed was to the late Turgut Ozal, Turkey's president. Ozal immediately granted Bush the right to fly U.S. sorties from Turkish bases, which became an important factor in the victory of the U.S.-led coalition.

Now, however, the vaunted Gulf War coalition appears to have evaporated. France and Russia have been lobbying to lift the U.N. sanctions on Iraq. Meanwhile, the relationship between Ankara and Washington has deteriorated to an amazingly low level: President Clinton didn't even place a phone call to Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan last week. Nor did the president request permission to use Turkish bases for U.S. air missions.

Just after the Gulf War, Ozal invited the two key Kurdish leaders — Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, and Jalal Talabani, who heads the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan — to Ankara. "He had a vision," says one of the late president's key aides, adding that Ozal kept the Kurds "under Turkish tutelage."

Since Ozal's death, however, successive Turkish governments have sought to disengage from the Kurds in northern Iraq. Ankara has been guided by an overriding fear that the zone created in northern Iraq might pave the way to an independent Kurdish state — a major threat, from Turkey's standpoint, to its own security. In this context, Turkish officials began to hope that Saddam would reassert his control over the area.

The Gulf War alliance between Turkey and the United States required enormous economic sacrifice from Turkey, which had long enjoyed substantial trade with Iraq. Turkey, moreover, has continued to suffer economically as a consequence of the United Nations' anti-Iraq sanctions regime, which deprived it of considerable revenues from the passage of Iraqi oil through a Turkish pipeline.

Turkey thus began to shift its priorities. The new Islamist government in Ankara now makes no secret of its interest in seeing the sanctions terminated. Recently, Turkey's prime minister sent two high-level emissaries to Baghdad with a special message for Saddam: They told Iraqi officials that Ankara wanted to normalize relations between the two countries.

Crushed between Turkey and Baghdad, northern Iraq also had to fend off Syrian influence. Syria backs the terrorists of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), who maintain bases in northern Iraq from which they strike at Turkey. PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan actually lives in Damascus. Indeed, both of the major Kurdish factions — Talabani's and Barzani's — were threatened by the well-armed PKK, which had some 40,000 troops in the area. As a result, in true Middle Eastern fashion, the two Kurdish groups began to court Damascus. In the end, the Barzani faction — whose relations with Turkey had been deteriorating since Ozal's time — struck up an alliance with Saddam and with the PKK. Meanwhile, Talabani turned to Iran for support.

If Washington made a single key strategic error during this confusing period, it was courting Syria's Hafez Assad. Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Syria repeatedly, to no avail, and President Clinton even called on Assad in Damascus. In the end, the wily Syrian dictator saw an opening in northern Iraq and played off one Kurdish faction against another.

Angry at the Kurds for flirting with Damascus, Turkey unwisely turned its back on them. Washington also failed to ensure Kurdish unity. Lacking adequate economic resources, the two key Kurdish factions fell to fighting over resources and power.

Two weeks ago, U.S.-sponsored peace talks between the Kurdish factions got underway in London. By then, however, Barzani had already "invited" Saddam to invade the "safe haven."

Turkey hopes to take advantage of the crisis by contemplating its own military activity. Ankara's goal is to create a permanent security zone from which to strike at PKK terror camps. This development can only complicate the U.S. effort to force Saddam's troops to withdraw from northern Iraq.

Barham Salih of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan claims that this episode "is a victory for Saddam." According to Salih, Baghdad has projected itself as a power to be reckoned with. The Kurd argues that Washington's missile attacks amount "to no more than a slap on the wrist."

Salih's point is difficult to counter. The United States needs to formulate a coherent policy to force Saddam from northern Iraq or to remove him from power. Air attacks should target Iraqi troops in the north or Baghdad itself. If the Iraqi dictator's recent actions spell the end of the protected northern zone, they constitute a tremendous setback for the United States. America's honor and prestige are at stake.

— 817·4·9·96 — © Steve Bell 1996

Iraqis Destroy CIA-Funded Operation

R. Jeffrey Smith

THE IRAQI military's recent takeover of a city controlled by independent Kurdish groups broke up a longstanding CIA-funded covert operation to destabilize the Iraqi government and led to the arrest and apparent execution of more than 100 Iraqis associated with the effort, according to U.S. officials and Iraqi dissident sources.

The destruction of the headquarters in Irbil of the Iraqi National Congress, which Washington had set up in 1992 as an alternative to the regime of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, has fulfilled a major ambition of Saddam's security services, the officials said.

The dissident group never succeeded in posing a serious challenge to Saddam's power and had been in decline over the past 18 months, largely because of feuds among the Kurds, but it had repeatedly harassed the Baghdad government.

When Irbil fell, Saddam's security agents moved swiftly to exact their revenge, using a list of names and addresses of National Congress members, according to officials of the group in Sulaymaniyah inside Iraq, and in Washington and London. The agents also looted the group's headquarters, seizing communications equipment and computers purchased in part with covert CIA funds.

Adding to the magnitude of the CIA's loss is the apparent execution of more than 100 members of the congress who were captured by the Iraqi secret police on August 31 near the town of Qushtapa. They had assembled in Irbil on August 28 and 29 as part of a police force being created at U.S. urging to halt fighting between warring Kurdish groups.

In contrast, a handful of American CIA officers who had been covertly stationed in a suburb of Irbil before the Iraqi attack were able to escape capture by leaving the area on August 30, reaching southern Turkey after passing through the northern town of Zakhu, according to several knowledgeable sources.

The absence of any U.S. protection for the members of the dissident congress in Irbil has provoked complaints from some of those associated with the group, who say that Washington essentially washed its hands of the congress once the Iraqi assault got under way.

The Iraqi dissidents' criticisms brought an angry rebuttal from a senior State Department official involved in policymaking on Iraq. "There were clear warnings — public and private ones — that we considered . . . [the city of Irbil] an unsafe place," he said.

He noted that the congress members who were caught and executed at Qushtapa evidently had tried to repulse an Iraqi attack there before running out of ammunition, and added, "They knew of the dangers. It may have been foolhardy to try to resist" the oncoming Iraqi forces.



Celebrating Chechens Mourn Dead

Lee Hockstader in Grozny, Russia

THOUSANDS of Chechens streamed across the shrapnel-strewn rubble of what used to be Grozny's graceful central square last week to mourn their war dead and commemorate their drive for independence that began five years ago.

Chechen leaders, wary of provoking Moscow with too triumphant a celebration, had banned any military parades and declared the occasion one of remembrance and sacrifice. Still, the official solemnity of the day — the prayers and dances for the deceased — did not disguise the fact that most Chechens believe the 20-month war with Russia is over essentially because they have won it.

It was on September 6, 1991, that a mob led by Dzhokhar Dudayev, a former Soviet air force general, stormed the Communist-dominated parliament in Chechnya and effectively dissolved it. Dudayev was elected president of the region a few weeks later. When Moscow denounced the election as a fraud, Dudayev declared Chechnya independent of Russia.

Dudayev was killed in April by a Russian rocket attack, but his memory lives on strongly here. People chanted his name last week and plastered his image around town. Mothers name their babies after him.

Friday last week was doubly triumphant for many Chechens, marking not only the five-year anniversary of their bid for independence but also the one-month anniversary of the rebel raid on Grozny that led to a calamitous defeat for Moscow.

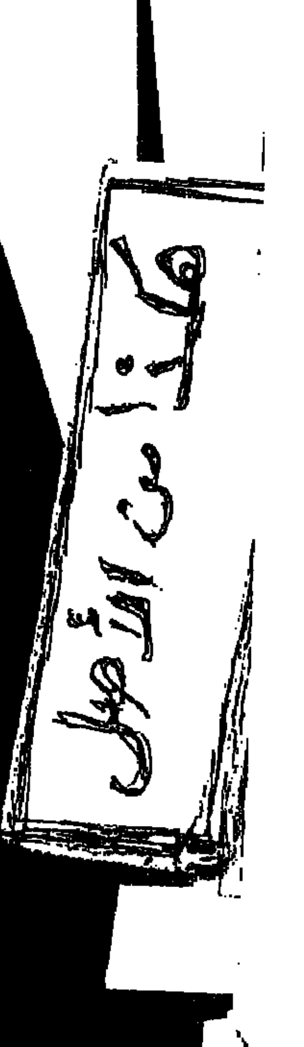
Last Friday, a couple of Russian armored troop carriers rumbled by the downtown rally, but the Chechens did not pay them much attention. The dwindling presence of Russian forces in Grozny these days clearly poses no threat, and they are able to move about at all only because the Chechens tolerate it.

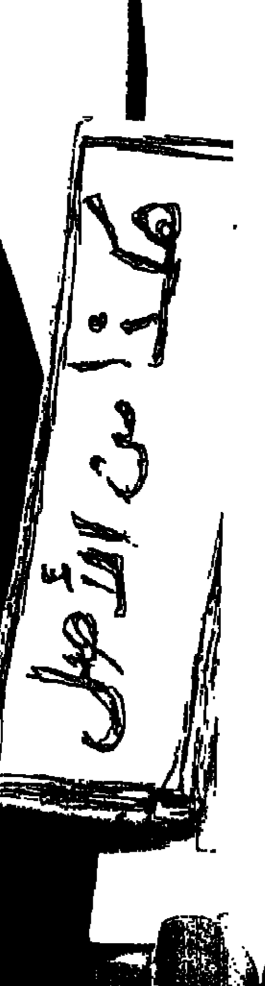
Indeed, despite a steady stream of criticism in Moscow of the peace process and its champion, Russian national security chief Alexander Lebed, it is apparent here that peace has its own momentum on the ground in Chechnya.

Nonetheless, it was hard for some Russians to swallow even the muted celebration here and in other towns and villages around the region. At a Russian military checkpoint on the edge of town, a group of dispirited soldiers watched glumly as the traffic streamed past. One boy on the back of a flatbed truck made an obscene gesture at the troops. Other cars had their windshields plastered with pictures of Chechen war heroes, some of whom are regarded as terrorists in Moscow's eyes. And armed guerrillas leaned out of jeeps flying the green flag that symbolizes Chechen independence.

"This goes on like this all day," said a Russian major, his eyes cold as he watched the passing traffic.

Lebed, just back in Moscow after another trip to Chechnya to firm up the peace, told a television interviewer that the war will be difficult if not impossible to reignite. "We have ended the war," he said flatly.





Yousef Convicted of Bomb Conspiracy

Dale Russakoff in New York

RAMZI Ahmed Yousef, the alleged terrorist mastermind accused of scripting the World Trade Center bombing, and two co-defendants were convicted last week of a conspiracy to bomb 12 U.S. jumbo jets and 4,000 passengers out of the sky over the Pacific Ocean — a plot the government described as "one of the most hideous crimes ever conceived."

After a three-month trial that opened a window onto the modern age of international terrorism, a federal jury in Manhattan convicted Yousef, Abdul Hakim Murad and Wali Khan Amin Shah on all seven counts related to the foiled bombing plot, which was to unfold over a two-day period in January 1995.

Yousef, 28, was convicted also of bombing a Philippine Airlines jet in 1994, killing one passenger, as a dress rehearsal for the larger conspiracy, and Shah was convicted of trying to escape from prison here.

All three showed no emotion as the jury foreman reported the verdicts and as a court clerk re-read them, intoning "guilty," again and again. The jury of five women and seven men, kept anonymous for security reasons, was escorted home by court personnel and did not comment. Lawyers for the three defendants said they would appeal.

Yousef's convictions carry three mandatory life sentences plus up to 100 years in prison and $2.25 million in fines. He is to stand trial next year on charges of orchestrating and helping to carry out the 1993 Trade Center bombing, which transformed international terrorism from a distant horror to a threat facing Americans in their own communities.

The threat became even more real at mid-trial when Trans World Airlines Flight 800 exploded and crashed into the Atlantic Ocean barely 50 miles away from the courthouse here, with eerie parallels to Yousef's alleged plot to explode planes over the Pacific.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys feared that the July 17 crash, in which all 230 people on board perished, would prejudice the jury, which was not sequestered. Criminal investigators have speculated that a miniature, time-triggered bomb similar to those devised by Yousef was used, might have destroyed Flight 800 but so far they have uncovered no conclusive evidence to support that theory.

But after polling jurors and telling them to ignore reports about the TWA disaster, U.S. District Court Judge Kevin Thomas Duffy ruled that they would remain fair. After last week's verdict, he told Yousef, Murad and Shah that they had received an "extremely fair trial."

Defense attorneys said after the verdict that they do not believe the horrific crash alone caused the jury to convict the defendants on all counts. But all said it may have been a factor. "It's in their subconscious. It certainly played a part," said Shah's court-appointed attorney, David Greenfield.

He also asserted that his client — against whom prosecutors presented the least evidence — was convicted because of anti-Muslim prejudice and fear of terrorism.

U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White and James Kallstrom, head of the New York office of the FBI, declared the verdict a victory in what Kallstrom called a "war" on terrorism. They said afterward that Yousef's plot came very close to succeeding. It was uncovered as he and Murad mixed explosives in a Manila apartment and accidentally unleashed a smoke cloud that alerted a security guard — and eventually the police.

Yousef boasted to a U.S. Secret Service agent that he would have bombed a dozen planes within weeks had he not been discovered.

Investigators found detailed plans of the plot in a laptop computer recovered from Yousef's Manila apartment. Five bombers were to fly on 12 U.S. jumbo jetliners in the Far East, slip bombs made using Casio digital watches under their seats, and disembark, with the bombs timed to explode when the planes were high over the Pacific en route to the West Coast.

Kallstrom, who is leading the investigation of the TWA crash, would not discuss possible links between that disaster and Yousef's plot.

Yousef acted as his own lawyer during his trial, seemingly at ease with U.S. legal jargon. He told the jury the entire case was fabricated by Philippine and Pakistani authorities to curry favor with the United States, which was then hunting Yousef in the World Trade Center case.

Kashmiris 'Pressurized To Vote'

Kenneth J. Cooper in Srinagar

THE first day of voting to elect a government for the disputed Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir saw voters turning out in greater numbers than they did for parliamentary elections four months ago, but evidence indicated that not everyone was going to the polls voluntarily.

Security forces were seen pressuring people to the polls, a tactic they employed during elections for the federal parliament in May. Reporters saw squads of army and paramilitary officers going from house to house in some localities, but they seemed to have acted less harshly and inspired less fear than they did during the May vote.

As they did four months ago, appointed state officials denied that security forces threatened to harm Kashmiris if they did not vote.

In some areas of the Himalayan state, riven by separatist violence for almost seven years, residents voted eagerly and in numbers that kept polling officers busy all day. State officials said the estimated turnout of between 50 and 53 percent showed genuine interest in the state's first elections for its own legislature since 1987. By comparison, 46 percent voted in May's Indian parliamentary election and an average of 68 percent cast ballots in Kashmir's last four legislative elections.



A Srinagar anti-election protester hurls back a tear gas canister at some of the 200,000 troops overseeing the poll PHOTO SHERWIN CRASTO

The voting, due to take place on four days, ending on September 30, is designed to end nine years of direct rule by the Indian government and restore democracy to the only majority-Muslim state in predominantly Hindu India. Most analysts predict the regional National Conference — led by Farooq Abdullah, who resigned as Kashmir's chief minister at the start of a separatist rebellion in 1990 — will form its new government in early October.

The elections have raised hopes among some voters of a restoration of peace, a grant of greater autonomy to the state and a new round of negotiations between India and Pakistan, which have gone to war twice since 1948 because of their conflicting claims to the territory.

India's security forces largely have quashed the armed rebellion, according to state officials, who said they arrested three separatist leaders of political groups last week under a preventive detention law because they had tried to obstruct Saturday's voting. The state's police chief, Mahendra Sabharwal, said the three were released after the polls closed.

State officials said there were no election-related deaths. Sabharwal acknowledged that a boy, 14, was killed in cross-fire between troops and separatist rebels, and two 10-year-old boys died when a rocket-propelled grenade fired from a mountainside landed in a schoolyard.

Sabharwal dismissed reports that security officers had forced people to vote as "militants' propaganda."

In Mazbugh, a small village on a back road northwest of Srinagar, the summer capital, a reporter saw 16 paramilitary officers going from house to house, cursing residents and demanding that they come out to vote. When other reporters approached, the squad walked away, and its leader hurriedly explained they were on routine patrol. Agitated residents at a polling place nearby said the paramilitary forces had threatened them.

In Drooru, a small village near a mountainous area once popular with tourists, turnout exceeded 64 percent, and residents lounged near the polling place in a relaxed atmosphere, socializing. Syed Sajad, a state employee, said he favored the National Conference because "it will bring harmony for our people."

Flamethrowers Anonymous

OPINION
Ellen Goodman

IT IS Friday afternoon and the traffic gods whizzing overhead in helicopters are warning of the bumper to bumper weekend exodus. I am crawling over the city line when a young man in an old Toyota cuts in front of me and, in the style for which Boston drivers have become famous, throws me the finger.

Thank you and have a nice day.

I am somewhere near the New Hampshire border doing penance for my early escape from the office by listening to talk radio. John from Boise is making his feelings about gay marriage as explicit as you can without using expletives. Paul from Bismarck or is it Carl from Potsdam is talking about the president and first lady in ways that do not reflect well on his upbringing.

So kind of you to call.

Halfway up the seacoast, my Thank God It's Friday Mood has darkened considerably. As I cross the Maine border, I push Patti Smith into my tape deck. But my internal track is playing a second tape entitled: What on Earth is Wrong With People?

I am no double for Miss Manners. More than one unkind phrase has tripped off my tongue or fingertips. But if I am happy to be leaving civilization this late summer weekend, it may be because civility has already departed.

Last night, exploring the vast mansion of the Internet, I wandered into several unfamiliar chat rooms. Some visitors were people who change nicknames more often than they do socks. These are people who checked their courtesy along with their identity at the door. A main method of communication in these chambers seems to be flaming.

What they have in common with the digit-wagging driver, with the talk-show callers is not just their aerobic exercise of the "freedom of speech" — a freedom that leaves even this First Amendment junkie grimacing — but they belong to the growing uncommunity of people who now act with the protection of anonymity.

Would that driver have expressed his opinion if he thought I knew his mother or his boss? Is the man from Bismarck equally nasty at his local market? Have any of the flamethrowers singed someone under their own name?

The rap on America is that we live today in a disunited state where, in the near-cliché phrase of Robert Putnam, we even "bowl alone." There are fewer communities to which we belong these days, fewer places where we are known. At the same time, there are far more opportunities for being anonymous. We have become as unaccountable to each other, as unaccountable for what we say, as unnamed sources.

A few weeks ago, there was an uproar when Joe Klein was revealed as the anonymous author of a scathing satirical novel. His colleagues brutalized him for lying to them. But not a word was said about his cowardice for flaming a president without facing him.

These thoughts follow me onto the ferry to one of the islands that dot this Maine coast. This floating community hall, where islanders check on the cork bulletin bord and on each other's children, traverses the short haul and long psychic distance to a place where people wave to each other along the country roads. Not just because it is an island custom but because we know each other.

If I have learned anything in my 15 years here as a summer person, it's the delicate ecology of island life where people are both away and together. It's the sense of community that comes from independence and mutual dependence.

I have learned that civility — not always intimacy and rarely hostility — sustains a community. That civility only rules when people understand that they must abide each other and abide together.

I am no island romantic. Even here, I know teen-agers who long for a place where people do not remember their grandparents or their first grade report cards.

On a mainland of individualists it's no surprise that many value the liberation that comes from being unknown. No surprise that many change identities as if life were a masquerade ball, or as if there were an endless supply of fresh starts.

So, on a late summer weekend, I look back at the coast of America. From here, it seems as if the contentious, fractured story of this country is now being written by Americans Anonymous.

Workaday Tales That Are Out of This World

Shannon Lucid takes hurtling around Earth with two Yuris in her stride, writes **Kathy Sawyer**

IF SHE'S wearing pink socks and making Jell-O for the boys, it must be Sunday.

This is how U.S. astronaut Shannon Lucid keeps track of the weeks as they zip by at 17,000mph outside the orbiting home she has shared for five months with two Russian cosmonauts named Yuri.

"When light follows darkness every 45 minutes, it is important that I have simple ways of marking the passage of time," she e-mailed friends in Houston. "Every once in a while, Yuri will come up to me and say, 'Isn't today Sunday?' And I will say, 'No, it's not. No Jell-O tonight.'"

Lucid, 53, is hardly a space-going geisha. She holds a doctorate in biochemistry and is the most experienced astronaut of either sex in the NASA corps, with five space flights and several orbital records to her credit. A wife and mother of three who is said to be an indifferent cook at home, she is the first U.S. woman (and the second American) to fly aboard Russian Space Station Mir, a 136-ton facility somewhat resembling a flying trailer park.

Since late March, when she floated aboard, she has shrugged off questions about male chauvinism or an East-West gender gap in orbit. Her credentials speak for themselves. But she has revealed glimpses of the joys and frustrations, smells and sounds of platonic cross-cultural domesticity in weightlessness 250 miles above Earth.

A portrait of workaday life on her history-making flight — due to end later this month — emerges in her e-mail messages supplied to The Washington Post, as well as occasional news conferences from Mir.

Now Lucid and "the two Yuris" have begun to pack for departure and their orbital camp has gotten more crowded. In a rocket-powered game of musical chairs, two replacement cosmonauts arrived at Mir last month on a Russian vehicle, along with a French female astronaut-scientist. The French woman and the two Yuris were due to depart for Earth last week, leaving Lucid on Mir with the two new cosmonauts. It's the same as "when your relatives come to visit," Lucid said, describing the cramped quarters.

She had expected a lift home aboard the space shuttle Atlantis by now. But technical concerns have delayed the launch by at least six weeks. She has already spent more time in space, and more on a single space mission, than any other American. On September 7, she surpassed the single-mission record of 169 days for women from any country. That honor was previously held by Russian cosmonaut Helena Kondakova, the only Russian woman who has made a long-duration flight on Mir.

The issue of how the Russian space program treats women arose in part because of comments by Yuri Glazkov, deputy director of the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, near Moscow. "We do not distinguish, professionally, between a man and a woman as an astronaut or a cosmonaut. . . . We don't have to expect that there are going to be curtains on the windows due to the fact that there is a woman on board," he said, speaking in Russian, at a Houston news conference before Lucid took the shuttle to Mir.

The crew members of the Space Shuttle Atlantis pose for their inflight portrait. Shannon Lucid is in the centre of the top row

Then he added, "We anticipate that the fans will be taken care of in a more timely manner because we know women love to clean and they will take care of the fans in order to allow less dust in the environment."

Glazkov later said he was misunderstood or mistranslated. The high-stakes U.S.-Russian missions in part aim to test whether representatives of the two former Cold War enemies can find happiness together while confined in small spaces in outer space. Lucid's arrival at Mir began what NASA hopes will be a permanent astronaut presence in orbit.

If all goes as planned, the two countries will lead the construction of a new international space station in orbit next year and send people to Mars in the next century.

"From everything I've heard, the two Yuris have really treated her as an equal," said John Uri of Johnson Space Center in Houston, the lead scientist for the U.S.-Russian flights. "They don't have as many women [in their space program] as we have. That's a difference in the cultures, I believe."

Lucid herself has expressed dismay at the fact that the early American astronauts were all men. After five months together, however, she, Commander Yuri Onufrienko, 35, and flight engineer Yuri Usachev, 38, get along "just real fine," Lucid has said repeatedly, in her mild Oklahoma twang. But she indicated that six months in space will have been plenty. Asked what she's learned about herself up there, she said, "My family would be surprised at the patience I've developed."

Somebody unnamed sent the pink socks into space with her as a surprise, she explained, and she "decided to wear them on Sundays." As for the Jell-O, she just loves it. It is packaged in a standard NASA drink bag. "We just add hot water, put the bag in the refrigerator and have a great treat."

She lives in a module separate from the men, with her own toilet. "I do have all the privacy I need," she said. She tries to exercise at least once a day. In zero gravity, her foot calluses have disappeared. She washes her hair only every three days, instead of every day as she does on the ground, using NASA's standard "no-rinse" space shampoo.

She mentioned in a recent e-mail that whenever her comrades go out for a spacewalk, leaving Lucid all alone inside, "Yuri puts a big piece of red tape across the communications controls I am absolutely not to touch." She said she would do the same thing if it were her spaceship and the roles were reversed.

Researchers on the ground expect Lucid to return with 800 pounds of biomedical and other research samples, including crew blood and urine, quail eggs, protein crystals, photo studies of deforestation and other changes on Earth, and related hardware and data.

Lucid was born to missionaries stationed in war-torn China and grew up near Oklahoma City. As a graduate student, she said, "I fantasized about having my own laboratory." The one she got was "in none of my fantasies." Last April she watched a long-awaited Russian research module, with American equipment installed for her experiments, "approach like a gigantic silver bullet moving in slow motion toward the station's heart" to dock with Mir.

She yearned for certain luxuries as she watched the arrival of Progress, a Russian robot supply ship. "All of a sudden, I really did feel I was in a cosmic outpost, anxiously awaiting supplies — and really hoping my family remembered to send me books and candy." They had.

Rebels Capitalize on Mexico's Pain

Molly Moore and John Ward Anderson in Huatulco, Mexico

MARIA del Rocio lives in a mud-and-stick hut two miles from a beachfront of multimillion-dollar resorts. Her three children sleep on palm leaves scattered on the bare dirt floor. Her husband earns $33 a week as a truck driver — when he can find work.

Here amid some of Mexico's most poverty-stricken people, the government is creating its poshest new mega-resort, including the largest Club Med in the Western Hemisphere. And it was here also, where the Mexico of Maria del Rocio and that of the Club Med collide, that a new leftist guerrilla group last month made its biggest strike yet against the government.

Ten people were killed here, just over a mile from the blue Pacific shore that attracts tourists from around the world. In all, 15 people were killed in coordinated attacks across four Mexican states.

"People are sick of the corruption and sick of the president saying things are getting better when their lives are really getting worse," said 30-year-old Juan, who drives a taxi for tourists visiting the Huatulco beach resorts. "If the government doesn't start answering to the people, it will face a revolution. This is the reality of Mexico."

To listen to the government, Mexico is a nation leaping into the next century with modern industry, vacation resorts and an economy that is slowly recapturing international interest after suffering its most severe crisis in 60 years. And officials have statistics to back up their claims.

At the same time, to drive the back roads of the nation's poorest regions, such as this Pacific Coast state of Oaxaca, is to see a Mexico mired in the last century, where rural Indians and peasants survive on a handful of beans and cornmeal each day and pay for makeshift huts without electricity, running water or sanitation. It is in the context of this seeming paradox that the new guerrilla movement sprang up, reflecting impatience among many Mexicans for their daily lives to catch up to the favorable economic statistics.

Almost three years ago, the free-market and privatization policies put in place by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari had jolted the economy into a boom performance, and the effects were just beginning to be felt by Mexicans on the bottom rung. Foreign investment had begun to create jobs, such as the hotel construction work in this resort 300 miles southeast of Mexico City.

But the growth process here and across Mexico was demolished by current president Ernesto Zedillo's botched peso devaluation on December 20, 1994 — 16 days after he succeeded Salinas. The devaluation, which made the country look insecure and unstable, wrecked investor confidence, leading to a flight of foreign capital that left the country unable to pay its bills and on the brink of default. The resulting inflation, unemployment and contracting economy hit Mexico's poorest citizens hard — the same ones who had been told repeatedly to place their hopes in Salinas' market reforms.

"There are two very different Mexicos living side by side," said Mexico City economic and political analyst Jonathan Heath. "In one is the top 15 percent who have the purchasing power; then we have a massive, very-low-income, poverty-stricken population, mostly concentrated in the south."

IT IS THIS persistent rift that helped foment the People's Revolutionary Army. Many political leaders say they believe the group is more dangerous than the mainly indigenous Zapatista rebels who waged a 12-day rebellion against the government in 1995 in the southern state of Chiapas — with the newcomers having more money, better weapons and a far wider reach.

"It's real and it's something to worry about," said Vicente Fox, governor of the state of Guanajuato and widely considered a future presidential candidate for the center-rightist National Action Party. "It's a clear expression of the frustration with the government," he said in an interview. Zedillo "keeps talking about macroeconomics and statistics showing the economic problems are over. That's not what we're seeing out in the street or what the people feel in their pockets."

That point was illustrated September 1, when Zedillo gave his second state of the nation address and highlighted Mexico's numerous improvements this year: Interest rates, unemployment and inflation are down; economic growth, exports and foreign currency reserves are up; and the peso is holding stable against the dollar. At the same time, the country paid back $9 billion of a $12.5 billion U.S. emergency loan and spent, or set aside, $24 billion to support the nation's banking system, which remains fragile.

"We think that Mexico is on the road to recovery and the U.S. is pleased and so are international corporations and the people at the top, but is this reaching down to the middle class and improving their lives, or are they mired in stagnation?" asked Peter Lupsha, senior research associate at the University of New Mexico's Latin America Institute. "The common people are feeling the pinch. The macro policies are succeeding, but they aren't making tortillas any cheaper or salaries any better."

For people on the street, the key problem is erosion of wages brought on by a 50 percent devaluation of the peso in late 1994 and 52 percent inflation in 1995, which has cut deeply into buying power. More than 15,000 businesses went bankrupt, 2 million people were thrown out of work and interest rates soared to 140 percent. For average Mexicans, "Their situation is much worse than it was two years ago, and they're angry at the government because this crisis was manufactured by the government" through its botched peso devaluation in December 1994, said Nora Lustig, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

"There's no way in the near future that they'll be compensated for the losses of '95, and that's why people are not sharing in the government's optimism about the recovery."

"We're not asking for beautiful houses," said Felix Ramos Cabaleta, who runs a snack stand on an isolated stretch of highway outside Huatulco. "We just want good jobs so we can support our families."

● Zapatista rebels have broken off peace talks with the Mexican government in a move that appeared designed to increase pressure on an administration grappling with the emergence of a second guerrilla group.

The Zapatistas said in a letter to the government last week that they were halting the 16-month-long peace negotiation because of the "arrogance" of the government and accused it of using the new rebel uprising as an excuse to crack down on Zapatista supporters.

The Zapatistas — who have walked out of the slow-moving peace talks several times — also seemed to be trying to take advantage of the government's vulnerability in the aftermath of the synchronized attacks in four states.

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Overturning the Soviet Revolution

Oleg D. Kalugin

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE SOVIET EMPIRE:
Forty Years That Shook the World, From Stalin to Yeltsin
By Fred Coleman
St. Martin's. 459pp. $27.95


ILLUSTRATION: JEAN-FRANCOIS ALLAUX

FRED COLEMAN is a lucky man. He saw it all and missed nothing. His credentials are impeccable: He reported from Moscow between 1964 and 1995.

Two historic figures inspired Coleman to write The Decline And Fall Of The Soviet Empire: John Reed, the maverick American journalist who witnessed the birth of Russian communism in 1917; and Alexander Yakovlev, a former Soviet politburo member and an architect of Gorbachev's "perestroika."

To chronicle the demise of communism, Coleman, mindful of Reed's famous book Ten Days That Shook The World, subtitled his own in a similar manner but may have made a mistake: Did 40 years of Soviet rule really shake the world? Would not stagnation, decay and eventual disintegration be perhaps more appropriate words to describe the communist performance after Stalin? True, Gorbachev's ascent to power made all the difference. It was during his tenure that the Soviet system underwent the most profound change. And this is when Yakovlev's advice to Coleman came in handy: He urged Coleman to look at the picture of post-communist development and perspective from a distance.

In his interview with Coleman in 1991, Boris Yeltsin said it was impossible "to combine things that cannot be combined — to marry a hedgehog to a grass snake — communism and a market economy." And this is precisely the message and the leitmotif of Coleman's book. In tracking down the origins of the communist system — the brutality and duplicity of the founders of the Soviet state, the continuing power struggle in the Kremlin — he focuses on the legacy of totalitarian practices and totalitarian mentality that has been harrowing Russia since Stalin's death; on Nikita Khrushchev, with his limited destalinization, falling victim to party hacks; on Brezhnev and his clique, perpetuating unchallenged party rule and their own privileges.

Democratic reforms and communism are incompatible, Coleman points out. And he is right. One of the principal reasons Boris Yeltsin's reforms are moving forward so slowly is that neither he nor his closest advisors have jettisoned the Soviet ways of thinking and doing. Perhaps Coleman is too harsh on Yeltsin, writing him off as a man of yesterday. After all Yeltsin has made it again, winning the presidency of Russia.

But it is not Khrushchev, Brezhnev or even Yeltsin who dominates the narrative. The towering figure is Mikhail Gorbachev, Coleman's hero, the man who "accomplished more than any other statesman in the world during the last half of the twentieth century."

For six years Coleman watched Gorbachev chart his course, maneuvering between what he hoped to achieve and what his hard-line opponents in the Kremlin would let him do. The account of his efforts to reform his country is the best part of the book. Now that Gorbachev's fortunes have slipped badly and his name is sinking into oblivion, Coleman reminds us that "each of the major reforms he ushered in was nothing short of miraculous at the time." In many ways Boris Yeltsin owes to Gorbachev his emergence as a national leader: Yeltsin took advantage of the former Soviet president's tolerance of political dissent.

Like any Westerner, even one experienced in Russian affairs, Coleman has retained some misconceptions about Soviet life.

He overestimates the power of the KGB and its heirs, which he says "even today . . . have a veto on Russia's future" and can "remove any military or political leader standing in [their] way." His assertion that KGB special troops crushed unarmed demonstrators in Tbilisi in 1989 is erroneous. It was the army of the North Caucasian Military District under the command of recently appointed Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov that charged into the crowd and beat many people to death. Occasionally Coleman repeats and contradicts himself. For example, he states that "the Soviet threat to America was imaginary" but three pages later says that "of course the Soviet threat was deadly serious."

This book differs from many others of the same genre because, among other things, it contains the author's detailed proposals on how the United States should respond to potential new Russian threats. Coleman believes that, "had U.S. diplomacy challenged the Soviets more boldly in the fifties and the sixties, communism could have collapsed decades earlier . . ." In effect, he suggests that "brinkmanship" is a preferred policy for the United States. In his opinion, oil and gas embargoes and all sorts of pressures short of war would make Russia behave the way the West wants. As a student of Russian history, Coleman should know that nothing could be further from the truth. Western influence has always been marginal in Russia, and it will most likely stay that way for a long time. Suffice it to say that Castro's Cuba, no match for Russia, has not succumbed to U.S. economic blackmail.

Coleman's mind-set inevitably leads him to another erroneous conclusion — that detente was a one-way street that facilitated Soviet designs on the world. On the contrary, more than anything else, detente paved the way to Russian reforms, for it opened new horizons for millions of oppressed people. And communism eventually collapsed under the burden of its own inefficiency, inhumanity and blunders. The militancy of Coleman's suggestions on how to bolster the U.S. stance vis-à-vis "unruly" Russia overshadows some of his more sensible ideas and spoils the overall impression of this otherwise excellent book.

Some Like It Cold

Donna Rifkind

THE FREQUENCY OF SOULS
By Mary Kay Zuravleff
Farrar Straus Giroux. 244pp. $23

CAN A novel survive on quirks alone? Mary Kay Zuravleff's first book of fiction, The Frequency Of Souls, is an amiable comedy of manners distinguished by what amounts to a festival of eccentricities exhibited by its various characters as Zuravleff aspires to send comedic sparks flying from the unlikely subject of refrigeration engineers in Washington, D.C.

The novel's hero, George Mahoney, is a designer at the Coldpoint refrigerator plant in Rockville, Maryland, who is outfitted with the full regalia of the electrical engineer, from his clip-on tie to his gum-soled shoes. Thirty-nine years old and married to his college sweetheart, Judy, a "tightly laced" real-estate broker, George has developed a mid-life crush on his co-worker, a 28-year-old woman named Niagara Spense who is six feet tall and wears crudely homemade dresses, thick eyeglasses and a hearing aid.

What attracts George to Niagara — aside from his libidinous observation that "everything that was held close on Judy's body was splayed and dangling on Niagara's" — is her belief in the affinity between science and spirituality. She's using her job at Coldpoint to finance a bold idea: Having installed a satellite dish outside a trailer full of tubes and wires, she means to try to channel the dead through radio waves. George, "convinced that the universe was soldered together with logic," has always looked to science to provide only comfort and practicality. But after 14 years of designing icemakers, George is wondering if he hasn't gotten a little stale.

Side by side with this high-minded flirtation is an equally spirited domestic comedy, which plays out in the Mahoneys' home. Here George and his two children are all chafing under the tight control of compulsively organized Judy — particularly Harris, the Mahoneys' chubby, precocious 12-year-old son.

George is sympathetic toward Harris's resistance to Judy's campaign to curb the boy's weight, having himself suffered so tyrannical a mother that her death brought him profound relief. ("He felt as if a jagged rusty trap had finally released his leg, a leg that the trap itself had somehow brought into existence.")

In truth, though, Judy's dictatorial efficiency does this family rather more good than harm, providing George, whom his wife has labeled a "textbook passive-passive," with a degree of physical and emotional comfort which he is mightily reluctant to surrender: "It occurred to [George] that being married was like owning all your favorite songs. They were so familiar that you often forgot to play, let alone enjoy, them."

What is one to make of this sweet-natured, wacky book? It is too engaging and full of promise to be dismissed as just one more wavelet in the ceaseless tide of new fiction. Yes, it's ultimately a superficial, even a frivolous effort but who's to say there isn't a place for the lightweight first novel, especially one as brisk and bracing as this?

True Confessions of the Supreme Being

James Morrow

THE LIFE OF GOD (AS TOLD BY HIMSELF)
By Franco Ferrucci
Translated from the Italian by Raymond Rosenthal and Franco Ferrucci
University of Chicago Press. 283pp. $22

"GOD'S only excuse is that he does not exist," wrote Stendhal, but now Franco Ferrucci has provided the Supreme Being with another sort of alibi.

When The Life Of God (As Told By Himself) arrived in my mailbox, I imagined I was about to experience a literary non sequitur, a first-person novel by an omniscient narrator. Ferrucci's God, however, is neither all-knowing nor all-powerful: not exactly the "underachiever" posited by Woody Allen in Love And Death, more a poet whose fancies keep springing into palpable form. The poet wants no truck with evil, but he is helpless to prevent it.

The Life Of God gives us a decidedly existential deity, an "atheistic God" in search of himself, a goal he hopes to achieve by writing his autobiography. As the results unfold, this protean person — not so much the God of the philosophers as a philosopher who happens to be God — roams through the centuries like a benign vampire, melding with a succession of historical bystanders, the better to salve his solitude.

Our hero impresses nearly everyone he meets, a stellar cast that includes Xenophanes, Seneca, Columbus, Shakespeare, Dante, Galileo, Einstein and Mussolini. It's a grand device, the sort of mad artistic scheme that allows an author to write such uncommon sentences as "I told myself that when he awoke Freud would be mortified at the thought of having peed on himself in the presence of God."

The Life Of God is ill served by its title. The label that underscores the novel's lamest aspect — its relentless whimsicality, its insistent archness.

The coyness is particularly prominent in chapter one, which chronicles the cosmos prior to the arrival of *Homo sapiens*. While the language is evocative, this first section partakes more of fable than epiphany. Ferrucci's God is not a very good scientist — I noticed him confusing apes with monkeys, and placing meteorites in deep space, among other errors — but he's a terrific writer: "When the storm finally weakened, I saw a placid crimson sunset, and my creation had the languorous beauty of a face after a fit of weeping." The multiplicity of such passages subdued any urge to skim.

Ferrucci's opening gambit is also admirable for its irreverence. By treating our culture's central myth as a kind of Aesop's miniseries or Kipling Just So story, the author achieves a caliber of iconoclasm that rivals the more aggressive blasphemies of Mark Twain's Letters From The Earth or Joseph Heller's God Knows.

In chapters two and three, Ferrucci hits his stride. The joke starts working. As God tilts with one luminary after another, the novel repeatedly evokes one of the greatest scenes in all literature: the "poem" by Ivan Karamazov in which Christ returns to confront the Grand Inquisitor. Dostoyevsky's Inquisitor, you may recall, had no use for the Catholic Church's founder, and Ferrucci's assorted celebrities are similarly disinclined to solicit God's opinions. The Supreme Being futilely questions Moses's obsession with rules and tries in vain to key Augustine's conversion to an appropriate biblical passage.

The deity who emerges here is one for whom the great religious controversies simply don't matter. In these gently subversive passages Moses's alleged intimacy with God, Jesus's ostensible powers of salvation, and Buddha's presumed enlightenment emerge as wholly human constructs.

Ferrucci is at his wry best in the final chapter, where, instead of incorporating a person, the deity fuses with the pages of Moby Dick, inevitably becoming the whale himself. For mere mortals, such a stunt would be dangerous, but our hero has no trouble preserving his sanity. As he puts it, "Only God and silverfish can safely get inside books."

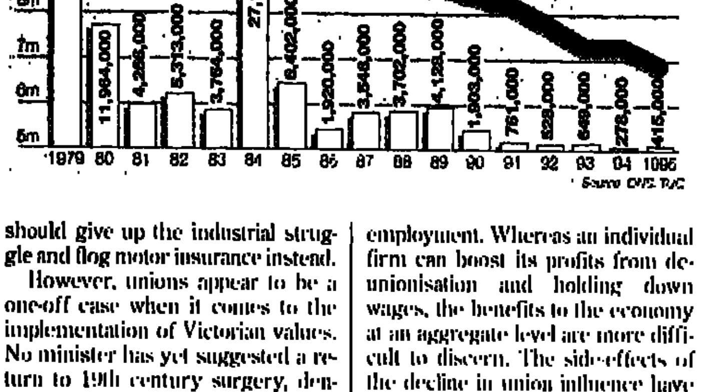
It should be clear by now that The Life Of God is essentially an elaborate conceit. Reading it is like watching a virtuoso violinist play a concerto on an instrument containing a single, mile-long string. The variations he rings are astonishing, his athleticism is breathtaking, but it still remains a one-note performance.

And yet I would not have it otherwise. If Ferrucci had added another string to his fiddle — if he had given his novel a plot, say, or gone into the heads of other characters — he might easily have lost the healing sweetness that constitutes its core.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 15 1996

Class war that yields no benefits

Larry Elliott on the economic effect of shackling trade unions



THOSE of us who dislike Manchester United winning everything in football all the time should take some lessons from the way the Government has handled the unions these past 18 years.

The first thing to do is insist that United are not allowed any foreign players; then that a member of the Manchester City fan club should referee their games. So, it will continue, season by season, until United have to play both halves up a one-in-four slope at a redesigned Old Trafford and pay a fine every time they commit a foul.

After 10 years, when the fans have lost heart, those of us who support other clubs can suggest United have no future as a team but might prosper if they sell replica kits.

This process will be familiar to trade unions, and it's easy to see why it has met with such thunderous applause on the right. The attack on the trade unions — through deflationary economic policies and relentless legislation — has been class warfare at its crudest. Why bits of the the left should also be parroting such reactionary twaddle is more puzzling.

The fact is that the shackling of the unions is up there with the Falklands war as one of the achievements of four terms of Conservative government. Indeed, it was where Mrs Thatcher's thirst for a return to Victorian values was fully slaked.

Ministers argue that the tough approach has worked, because turning the clock back has improved the climate of industrial relations, boosted productivity, and brought about a sea change in pay bargaining.

The right insists breaking the power of organised labour has been good for workers as well, if they would but admit it. Unions act more responsibly, are more in touch with what their members want. They should give up the industrial struggle and flog motor insurance instead.

However, unions appear to be a one-off case when it comes to the implementation of Victorian values. No minister has yet suggested a return to 19th century surgery, dentistry or sanitation. Nor has any member of the Government been brave enough to claim that it would boost competitiveness to deprive women of the vote.

Yet a master-servant approach to industrial relations is deemed a good thing, even if it means employers can flout health and safety regulations and sack staff with impunity to prevent them from qualifying for statutory employment rights.

Even such bastions of laissez-faire thinking as the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development now agree that this is not the way forward, given that the West is never going to compete in terms of wage costs with south Asia or eastern Europe.

The evidence that the campaign waged against the unions has delivered the economic benefits claimed is tenuous. The argument is that unions distort supply and demand in the labour market by pushing up wages and reducing investment. This reduces demand for labour.

Nice theory, but after 18 years we still seem to be waiting for the higher investment and the lower unemployment. Whereas an individual firm can boost its profits from deunionisation and holding down wages, the benefits to the economy at an aggregate level are more difficult to discern. The side-effects of the decline in union influence have been widening income inequalities, rising poverty and job insecurity, which have had detrimental effects on growth, the balance of payments and public finances.

Apologists for the new right would argue that this attack on labour is warranted, because it should lead to a fall in the share of national income taken by wages, and a rise in the share for investment. The story of the past 18 years is quite different. Wages as a share of gross domestic product have fallen, but all this has meant is that dividends have gone through the roof.

The Government seems proud of this, impervious to the notion that the future for Britain is a decently paid, highly productive, secure workforce. But plans for further curbs on unions would be a bridge too far.

Back in the 1970s, union bosses were the satirists' target; no longer. If popular culture says anything about the political mood, the public thinks the villains are now the bosses. Union membership may have fallen to below 8 million, but the Trades Union Congress believes there is a hidden pool of potential recruits — perhaps several million — reluctant to join for fear of reprisals.

Nor is it true that the days of industrial action are over. The number of days lost through strikes has fallen sharply over the past 18 years (as the graph shows), but in the first half of this year, there were yes votes in 81 per cent of ballots. Unions have been using the votes to good effect. Following a successful ballot, two out of three disputes were settled without recourse to industrial action.

So, where now? The trend in industry during the 1990s has been for firms to concentrate on their core business — unions should do the same. If unions can't deliver on bread and butter issues — pay and working conditions — will members think it likely they can beat Direct Line when it comes to car insurance.

Two things will help in this respect. Inflation is weak, which should allow monetary policy to be expansionary — good for employment and union recruitment.

The other factor is the prospect of a Labour government. Tony Blair has said that there will be no favours to the unions, but in power he will need the unions as much as they need him. The TUC believes it can expect a minimum wage, the Social Chapter, the right to recognition, and protection against dismissal during a legal dispute.

It would like more, such as instant employment protection against unfair dismissal and greater freedom to prosecute disputes against companies that divide themselves up to prevent secondary action, but John Monks, TUC general secretary, says Labour's four commitments should not be underestimated.

Let's hope so. Some on the left think unions are no longer needed these days but they are fuzzy about what the benefits are to workers. Simple. In the days the boss would say "You're fired", you would fetch the shop steward. In the de-unionised "us-and-us boss" world of the future the boss says: "I understand your pain but you're fired all the same."

Red faces at pillar of City establishment

Paul Murphy

IN THE heart of the City, on the corner of London Wall and Old Broad Street, there is a big hole in the ground surrounded by blue boarding. It is the site for the new London headquarters of Morgan Grenfell.

After last week's events at the German-owned investment bank's asset management division, it seems sure that a few of the biggest egos in the Square Mile will be buried in the foundations.

Alleged irregularities in three unit trust investment funds have caused rather more than inconvenience to 90,000 investors who stumped up $2.1 billion, while the industry has suffered important structural damage.

After a three-day suspension, trading in the stricken funds resumed last Thursday, but having read tales that suspended fund manager Peter Young had been betting huge portions of investors' cash on high-risk technology and drug stocks, investors accounting for 8 per cent of the three funds withdrew their cash. A bloody and convoluted post-mortem at one of the City's premier firms is under way.

Since Morgan's takeover in 1989 by Deutsche Bank, Germany's largest, the London investment bank has exuded a special sort of arrogance. As Deutsche has furthered its stated intention of turning Morgan into the hub of a global, all-powerful securities business, some of the most talented individuals in high finance have been tempted through its doors.

Nestling in this top drawer was Mr Young, a bright 38-year-old who seems to have impressed just about everyone he met. He had taken over management of two of the three stricken funds in May 1994 from John Armitage, who had been spectacularly successful. Mr Young had no intention of letting things slip.

Money continued to pour into the biggest fund, the European Growth Trust, and it retained its ranking close to the top of the investment league tables until the later part of last year.

Then, at the beginning of this year, the fund's position in the league tables plummeted. As is now becoming clear, the fund manager had previously achieved such a stunning performance by backing small, young companies.

In April, with the performance of Mr Young's funds leaving a good deal to be desired and with the trustees, General Accident, beginning to ask a few awkward questions about the size of investments in unquoted companies, the fund manager's bosses instructed him to reduce his exposure to such high-risk companies.

At this stage, Morgan Grenfell now alleges, Mr Young is said to have set up a new batch of Luxembourg companies and hid his suspect investments deeper. It was only in the third week of August when the Securities and Futures Authority, one of the front-line City regulators that had been investigating the stockbroker which Mr Young used for his Luxembourg dealings, raised the alarm that Morgan Grenfell began to investigate his activity in earnest.

Deutsche Morgan Grenfell announced this week it planned a multi-million-dollar compensation programme for investors in the three unit trusts it was forced to suspend. City sources suggest Morgan could face a bill of about $150 million for compensation, and those likely to receive the most generous payments will be investors who bought into the funds earlier this year.

But the repercussions don't stop with Morgan and Deutsche. Fund managers across the City can now expect their portfolios to be reviewed in fine detail.


Young: high risk strategy

Imro, the watchdog that monitors the funds industry, has already said it will be reviewing its own rulebook and supervisory procedures. A clampdown on what many professionals in the past shrugged off as "technical" breaches of the rules is inevitable.

As for the whole system of "self-regulation" in the City, the Morgan Grenfell affair has hammered another nail in a coffin that seems to contain more iron than wood.

In Brief

A WAVE of panic selling hit Olivetti, Italy's troubled computer and office equipment group, driving its price down to an historic low. Shares closed on Monday 19.5 per cent down at 603 lire. It followed a week of upheaval during which chairman Carlo De Benedetti resigned. An investigation has been opened into insider share dealing.

JAPAN'S current account surplus shrank over the 12 months to July by $5.21 billion, or 27.3 per cent.

UNEMPLOYMENT in the United States sank to its lowest level for seven years in August, dropping to 5.1 per cent from 5.4 per cent in July.

GERMANY underlined the economic divergence with France, its key partner in the drive to create a single European currency, by disclosing a 1.5 per cent spurt in second-quarter growth — contrasting with a 0.4 per cent fall across the Rhine.

BRITISH Airways is considering cuts in service and staff to reduce costs by $1.5 billion over the next five years.

A ROW has broken out in Jersey over legislation which would give accountancy partnerships limited-liability status and protect them from having to make huge compensation payments to unhappy clients.

EUROTUNNEL is expected to announce a restructuring of its $13.5 billion debt in a deal likely to give 225 banks between 80 and 90 per cent of its shares.

LONRHO has postponed the $1billion flotation of its Princess Metropole hotels division after receiving several approaches for the business.

BIDDERS for new private rail franchises have been given confidential data on the vast surpluses in the British Rail pension fund to aid the speedy sell-off of the UK rail network.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates September 9	Sterling rates September 2
Australia	1.9462-1.9488	1.9732-1.9757
Austria	16.36-16.38	16.30-16.32
Belgium	47.90-47.96	47.67-47.76
Canada	2.1404-2.1424	2.1343-2.1364
Denmark	8.97-8.97	8.95-8.96
France	7.94-7.94	7.92-7.93
Germany	2.3258-2.3284	2.3175-2.3200
Hong Kong	12.05-12.08	12.08-12.08
Ireland	0.9631-0.9645	0.9638-0.9653
Italy	2,351-2,354	2,361-2,363
Japan	170.08-170.32	170.15-170.34
Netherlands	2.6072-2.6098	2.5967-2.5993
New Zealand	2.2407-2.2442	2.2591-2.2622
Norway	9.98-9.99	10.03-10.05
Portugal	238.12-238.41	237.23-237.54
Spain	196.23-196.50	195.56-195.76
Sweden	10.36-10.38	10.36-10.39
Switzerland	1.8902-1.8909	1.8856-1.8879
USA	1.5598-1.5604	1.5590-1.5600
ECU	1.2310-1.2323	1.2293-1.2306

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A dynamite story in the bushveld

Jay Griffiths finds an explosives factory bang in the middle of a South African nature reserve

WILDEBEEST career around the Mankwe nature reserve with a mighty stomp and springboks' prancing leaves prints in the dust. The impact of man's footsteps, though, in this arid corner of South Africa is the lightest of treads.

Dougal MacTavish, who manages the 9,000-acre site in the North West Province for the owners, ICI, walks softly through the bushveld. He reads the landscape and tracks animals from their spoor or their dung.

A giraffe lopes by. Rare white rhinos waddle into the bush, and lappet-faced vultures, able to peck through inch-and-a-half-thick rhino skin, shake a tall feather in the dry scrub of the wait-a-bit thorn.

MacTavish walks with his "right hand man," Buti Phalatsi, a black South African, who has spent years working in national parks. The two can identify animals by species, sex and age at vast distances. Something flickers across the horizon, so far and so quickly you miss it altogether. Dougal has it; it's a female warthog with four babies, he says. Only one of those babies will survive, he adds. Why? "Because only one of her nipples is working properly." (And it happens exactly as he predicts.)

Mankwe is not like other nature reserves. It is bordered by a guarded, electrified perimeter fence and in the heart of the reserve is one of ICI's largest explosive plants. Night and day the sound of detonators competes with the grunt of warthogs.

It is law that a large buffer area must surround such a site, and to an extent, ICI is making an environmental PR virtue of a legal necessity. But the spirit of Mankwe is largely the product not of boardroom decisions but of two "eco-subversives". One is MacTavish, who devotes much of his spare time as well as his working life to the site; the other is ICI's ex-company ecologist, Ken Smith.

But how do MacTavish and Smith square the fact that for all that David Attenborough endorses the site, and the extraordinary sensitivity, skill and commitment of those who work on site, the nature reserve stands cheek by jowl with a factory producing explosives for mining whose client list includes RTZ, infamous for the manner of its mining across the world?

Ken Smith argues that the consumer demands it. "I've never met anyone in the world, not the greenest of the greens, who doesn't use one of our products. Merely by being on Earth, man has an impact and if we want knives and forks and catalytic converters and roads, we have to have industries like ICI. The point is you've got to try to do it with the minimum impact." He, speaks with sincerity of the importance of greening industry from within.


Dougal MacTavish (left) with Ken Smith

Smith and MacTavish are building up a site database of all the reserve's birds and mammals, from the dung beetle to the rarest endangered creature. Their database is careful and exact, but one mammal is missing. It is as fascinating and playful, as destructive and nasty as a mammal can be and there are some 800 on site: the human being.


Ostrich farming in the heart of Mankwe nature reserve PHOTOGRAPH: JAY GRIFFITHS

Signs on the electric fence read "Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted" in three languages. The site security are armed and carry out target practice on-site.

Their chief enemy is the professional poacher armed with guns and the cruellest of snares.

"White South Africans," says MacTavish, a white Zimbabwean, "would shoot at animals just for fun because half of them are complete idiots. Black South Africans shoot for food. If someone's hungry, and they shot an animal to eat themselves, what is it to us? I wouldn't have hard feelings. But there's no one here starving — it's done for commercial gain."

Apart from poaching, there are legal reasons for fencing the site but the effect of the security is to highlight one of the most acute dilemmas of nature conservation. Is it axiomatic that unless man makes a profit out of nature he will destroy it? Is humanity the ineluctable enemy of animals?

From Mankwe, a nature reserve the size of 9,000 football pitches, the view is an African Eden. But what is the view like across the fence, from the nearby grid-patterned and suburban township of Mogwase? "I only know the fence," says the first person you talk to. And the second. And the third.

Julia, a local teacher, says, "When foreign companies come, they bring things which don't benefit us. When they're making a reserve, there's no link to people living around their companies. We have these big companies here, and they are very near, but, oh, they are very far from us."

Mankwe seems an off-ground place, linked more closely to other ICI sites in Teesside or Brazil than to its closest geographical neighbours. The factory is dislocated in time, too, for it does not run in sync with day and night, but is staffed to run 24 hours per day, in perpetual production for the sake of international market-time efficiency.

THIS dislocation of company to locality is part of a worldwide apartheid. ICI was up and running in South Africa long before apartheid laws were repealed, paying its dues and its due respects to prop up the apartheid regime. This worldwide apartheid is very much with us; the international rich versus the local poor; the economic colonialists, the invisible electric fences of educational opportunity and the security fences of the landowning classes, versus the ordinary, the local, the indigenous and the landless.

MacTavish's vision is to see that while practicalities demand that he repairs and strengthens the physical fence, he can simultaneously find ways of busting the metaphoric fence. When he took on the land, in 1988: "No one was allowed in. No one. I wanted that to change. It could be turned into a research site, plus there's a huge demand for education on subjects like this."

One of the greatest problems facing the new government in South Africa is the settling of land claims. There are no land claims on the Mankwe site, says Pretoria's Department of Land Affairs, nor is there a shortage of land in the area. Ecology experts say the best land use for this arid terrain is game farming such as MacTavish is running. His aim is "to make it produce on a sustainable basis, in terms of environment and in terms of revenue."

MacTavish insists: "I would like this place to be here for all time, irrespective of local politics. But for now, we are doing our best within the parameters we have."

While it seems invidious to suggest that people look after nature only when it makes financial sense, it is by understanding nature that the relationship between man and nature can be mutually beneficial. To ICI, nature's profits comes in rands, but to others the profits can come in educational and even psychological coins.

The fight for land goes on over the rainbow

Jenny Morgan

ELLEN MALEPHOI SEBETSO would like to make a lot of noise on the phone to a South African Department of Labour official, but his lunch-break seems to have been extended indefinitely. Sebetso is a para-legal working in the advice office of a community-based organisation, the Huhudi Civic; she is dealing with her umpteenth case of evicted farm workers and wants the official to intervene with the farmer in question. The official is an appointee of the previous regime.

"Under apartheid," says Sebetso, aged 29, "there were thousands of people enforcing hundreds of laws. Now, when we need the authorities to make these farmers stop abusing their workers' rights, no one seems able to act."

The Native Land Acts of 1913 and 1936 removed all but 13.7 per cent of South Africa's land from African ownership. Now around 60,000 white farmers own 80 per cent of the farmland. Actions taken so far by the new Department of Land Affairs, aimed at "a just land dispensation", have produced a disastrous counter-reaction from the white farmers. "They are just piling whole families into their trucks, and dumping them by the side of the road," says Sebetso. "The farmers say: Go to Mandela. Ask him for money."

In Vryburg, the small town where Sebetso works, farmers are trying to circumvent pending legislation that will give around 40,000 farm workers who occupy land in exchange for their labour rights to own the land they currently occupy.

The Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Bill provides for compensation to be paid to white farmers. Hilton Toolo of the Farmworkers' Research and Resource Project, questions the need for such compensation. Many labour tenants are descendants of the original owners of the land, he says, and they feel they have already paid for it with their sweat. As daily evictions swell the squatter area of Huhudi, Sebetso says angrily: "There's no democracy here. Why isn't the government taking any action to stop these farmers?"

In its dying days, says Toolo, the apartheid regime privatised huge tracts of land; when the Department of Land Affairs buys land to resettle dispossessed people, it has to pay the market price. But at least the community of Dithakawaneng, 17km from Vryburg, is back on the land it was forcibly removed from in the sixties, courtesy of the 1994 Restitution of Land Rights Act.

But there are problems. There's no infrastructure and the community is much bigger than it was in the sixties. Collen Colane, administrator of the Huhudi Civic, says there is a real possibility of violence as people compete for the land. "We thought the struggle was over," says Colane ruefully. "We're discovering it's only just beginning."

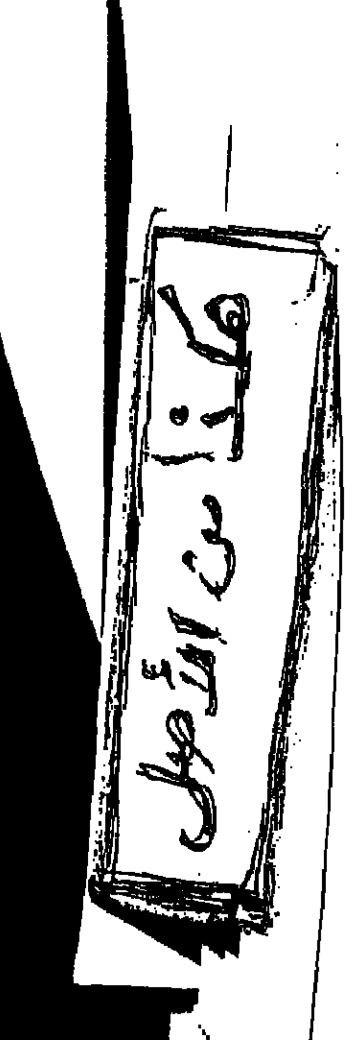
Boeboe van Wyk spends much of his life hurtling round the dirt roads of Namaqualand in the Northern Cape, helping small communities organise their submissions to the newly established Land Claims Commission. With so much of South Africa's experienced grass-roots leadership drawn off into parliament or the civil service, he is the sort of organiser communities desperately need.

"We're fighting to get our land back," says Boeboe, "and without community-based organisations the fight will die away." The map on the wall of his sparse office in Steinkopf — a "coloured reserve" 70km south of the Namibian border — shows land ownership in Namaqualand. It's an area twice the size of the Netherlands, yet on Boeboe's map the farms look like the squares of a board-game. "We've got these two back, because they were state land," he says, pointing to two vast spreads on the Orange river. "Now we're negotiating to get this one from De Beers."

Namaqualand's only industry is mining: De Beers owns the diamonds, Consolidated Goldfields the copper. Getting people settled on land they know how to farm is the only way to relieve joblessness and poverty.

The parents and grandparents of many of the people Boeboe works with used to own rich, green land along the Orange river. They were settled there by the Cape colonial government in the 19th century. But a Carnegie-funded initiative for "poor whites" in the 1930s dispossessed the coloured farmers and drove them off their land.

Gnarled survivors of that terrible time lined a Cape Town street earlier this year, when the Queen visited South Africa. One old man's placard told her: "Queen Elizabeth, you broke your great-grandmother's oath to the Namaqua people." The publicity was enough to get the British consul 600km up the motorway from Cape Town to consult with Boeboe. "You've got to make a lot of noise," says Boeboe with a triumphant gleam. "It's the only way to get things done."



Where words simply rush in

David Hearst on how Moscow is reeling from a verbal invasion

I DID not need a dictionary for my first brush with Russian authorities. I was trying to navigate Moscow's unfathomably obscure road system, where drivers have to perform complicated pirouettes should they be so foolhardy as to want to turn left.

Cars with foreign number plates were a lucrative source of income for a small army of traffic police — wolves as the Russians call them — who stood by the roadside preying on drivers like medieval robber barons. I was observed hesitating and was pulled over.

The conversation was conducted in single words. "Straff" (fine) he said. This was not Russian but German. When I got out my roubles, the wolf shook his head: "Baksy" (bucks or dollars). "Bon voyage," he said waving me on my way, $20 lighter.

As I later discovered, all these foreign words were in common Russian usage, the relics of waves of invasions of language dating back from Peter the Great. That great shipbuilder imported Dutch naval vocabulary as well as German military terms.

Even Alexander Pushkin, that great defender of the Russian language, wrote most of his letters in French.

As Pushkin's great friend Alexander Griboyedov observed, the language spoken by the Russian nobility was a frightful mixture of French and Lower Novgorod. Russia's revolutionaries were no better at preserving their language, casting its peasant notions aside for such great concepts as "revolutsia", "socializm" and "tredunionism".

So it should really come as little surprise to learn that when Boris Yeltsin once again opened Russia's doors and windows to Western influence in 1991, some 10,000 English words flew in. The latest edition of the Concise Oxford Russian Dictionary contains such gems as "politicheskaya korrektnost" (political correctness) of which there is none, "golfist" (golfer) and "skejtbord" (skateboard) of which there are some, and "raketeer" of which there are many.

The bewildered linguists of the Institute of Russian Language are trying to stem the flood of English words. English has been a real predator of Russian culture, sweeping in on the back of the free market. One "new" Russian can now say to another: "poyedem v casino, na lunch, tam kharoshee security" (let us go to the bar for lunch, it's got good security there).

As they chew their "riggliz speermyent, double djuce end doublemint", today's new Russian high-fliers are somewhat less elegant in their abandonment of their native culture. As Yelena Bonner, the wife of Andrei Sakharov and an eternal dissident, once said: "Democracy? It's more like dermocracy [shitocracy]".


Supporting role . . . Thanks to the efforts of Bristol doctors and social workers, Prince Drummie is able to carry on recording with local bands PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER JONES

Community care's front line

Mental illness may cross social boundaries, but most cases in Bristol come from the impoverished inner city area. **Heather Mills** meets the team that has to cope

RECENTLY Martin took a hammer to the head of a fellow resident in their Bristol hostel. Martin suffers from schizophrenia, and until the attack was looked after under the "care in the community" programme. No one saw the attack coming. In fact, only three hours earlier Martin had been seen by a social worker who found no cause for concern — sometimes "difficult", he had no history of violence.

But in one psychotic moment Martin joined those whom Bristol's Inner City Mental Health team view as dangerous. One more blow and there would have been calls for an inquiry into another "care in the community" tragedy.

As it is, the police and the health workers who look after him are investigating. Martin has been committed to a psychiatric hospital under the Mental Health Act and is likely to face criminal charges.

John and Martin are a small minority in the team's huge workload, but these are the cases that take up an inordinate amount of time and cause most anxiety for the health and social workers whose job it is to enable them to live in society.

The vast majority are vulnerable, a threat to no one but themselves. Take Charlotte, a descendant of a famous Victorian poet, whose anxieties often cause her to wander the streets. Or Peter, taken hostage by crack dealers who trashed his flat, stole his belongings, and so exacerbated his mental illness that they forced him back into hospital.

For thousands such as these, acute mental illness is a devastating, uphill struggle. No one can give them a cause for the spectrum of symptoms — bizarre thoughts, hearing voices, paranoia, delusion — that characterise schizophrenia, manic depression or psychosis. The prognosis is often bleak and they are likely to be on powerful anti-psychotic drugs, which can have unpleasant side-effects, such as stiffness and shaking.

The inner-city health team — a mix of health and social workers, psychiatrists, therapists and a psychologist — is responsible for Bristol's impoverished estates and streets a stone's throw from the affluent city centre. It assesses those with serious disorders, liaises with and advises doctors and health centres, voluntary agencies, police and hospitals. It has between 350 and 400 acutely ill people on its books — suffering mostly from schizophrenia, mania or depression.

That is about 1.5 people in every 1,000. Although mental illness crosses social boundaries, there is a wealth of evidence — all too obvious in Bristol's inner city — of links between poverty, deprivation and unemployment and psychiatric morbidity.

The inner city also has a large proportion of homeless people suffering from mental illness — people who can be difficult to engage in care and hard to monitor. And it has a large black population which, for reasons so far unexplained, suffers high levels of schizophrenia. Suspicion points at cultural and environmental influence — the higher rates are not mirrored in the Caribbean, for example.

Bristol's inner city accounts for seven out of every eight people admitted to acute psychiatric hospital beds in the city. Those in the team say resources have never matched the scale of the problem. As with most parts of Britain, the closure of the local asylum and the reduction in hospital beds have not been accompanied by funds to set up equivalent community services.

The nine community psychiatric nurses each care for an average of 27 patients — about six will be priority cases, needing at least weekly visits to administer drugs or to check on their health and welfare. But the area has no acute day-care centre, lacks properly staffed hostels and has too few supported housing schemes. Crucially, it also often lacks access to secure beds for the dangerous. Last month Dr David Mumford, a consultant psychiatrist and clinical leader of the inner-city team, wasted a day scouring the country for a secure bed, eventually finding one in London, miles from the patient's family.

Dr Mumford says he and his colleagues, nurses and social workers, are increasingly seen by patients and public as agents of social control.

The Government's response to the community care tragedies, he says, has been to impose stricter rules and greater responsibility on the front-line workers — such as the introduction of an "at risk" register — none of it accompanied by any resources or legal powers. "Passing the blame downwards distances Government and Cabinet from responsibility," Dr Mumford says.

The problems are now being recognised, to a limited extent, by the Government and the local health trust. The inner-city team has been awarded an extra £350,000 a year — almost double present funding. That will not provide the much-needed acute day centre, but it will allow recruitment of more staff and a seven-days-a-week service.

AS PRINCE DRUMMIE, who used to jam with Bob Marley in his native Jamaica, said: "I need somewhere I can go or someone I can see at whatever time of the day or night. I don't have no family I can call if I start feeling stressful."

Because no one has been around when he needed help, Prince — like so many other mentally ill — has ended up in police cells.

But it is not all tragedy within the city team. Despite their enormous responsibilities and workload, their efforts do keep many people out of hospital, jail and worse.

Prince Drummie is still recording with local bands. Kate, a young mother with a history of arson, has been reunited with her daughter. She is full of praise for the doctors and social workers who have helped her rebuild her life. Steve, who has made several attempts on his life, has found art therapy helps him to work out his anger and emotions.

What everyone — sufferers, doctors and health workers — agree is that the advantages of care in the community, when properly resourced, do outweigh life in an institution. "It may be that for some people care in the community is interspersed with periods in hospital — the aim is to keep the periods in hospital to a minimum and of short duration," says Dr Mumford.

"But without adequate hospital beds and resources we are in danger of coming full circle — a return to the poorly staffed, privately run homes for some, with others left on the streets, that led to the Victorian asylums in the first place."

THE Royal College of Psychiatrists — a body not given to scaremongering — has warned that mental health services for those with severe and acute illnesses are in danger of collapse. The warning followed a series of killings by the mentally ill which have all but destroyed public confidence in community care.

Although associated with the controversial healthcare reforms of the 1980s, care in the community has its roots in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Enoch Powell, then Conservative Minister of Health, questioned the inhumane treatment in overcrowded asylums and called for most of the "isolated, majestic, imperious and daunting" buildings to be torched. Introduced as anti-psychotic drugs were developed to control symptoms, his closure programme initially ran smoothly.

But the Government saw community care as a cheap option and, as hard-pressed hospitals began closing psychiatric beds in the 1980s, cracks appeared. Closures were not being matched by provision in the community, extra funding for mental health was spent on other services, and rising levels of unemployment and urban deprivation swelled the numbers of mentally ill.

As a result, acute psychiatric beds, designed to take patients for short-term treatment, are increasingly used for long-term care, leaving a huge shortfall.

Mr Powell accepted in 1961 that long-term secure beds would be recured "for a minority of patients". But only in recent months has the Government acknowledged the need for 24-hour care for those who may, on occasion, "be a danger to themselves and others".

In recognition of the crisis, ministers have promised an extra £95 million for mental health services. But by the Government's own estimates the funding is woefully inadequate.

The Department of Health, meanwhile, is considering introducing a new statutory body to combine health and social services for the mentally ill — further distancing itself from the crisis and blaming a lack of co-ordination by front-line workers for the problems.

Services for the seriously mentally ill remain stretched to the limit. Those with less severe problems must rely on GPs and counsellors. One in 10 psychiatric posts remains unfilled and trained nurses and social workers are leaving inner-city areas.

Dr Michael Shooter, deputy registrar of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: "We are in a precarious and potentially dangerous situation. That is not to say we do not agree with community care. We are very much in favour of it. It just needs to be properly resourced, so that people can do the job efficiently and safely with sufficient in-patient beds for when people need them." — *The Observer*

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Fear of the fern

Paul Evans

THERE is a hesitancy in the woods here, just before the turn from summer to autumn, a pause before any outward sign of change. This is a moment in the secret ripening of seeds and spores, a drawing-in of growth, a time characterised by bracken.

Throughout the woods and on the hillsides, this tall pervading fern has the power to unlock mood from the landscape. Just as bracken's rigid greenness and dark, peaty scent releases almost achingly sweet childhood memories, so it also forms a bridge between the world as we experience it now and one from which we evolved — a world far older than the deepest reaches of our imagination, a world which haunts and now disturbs us.

Bracken has its origins in the carboniferous period 350 million years ago, long before the appearance of flowering plants, in the swamp forests which vanished and laid down coal. Bracken, like most ferns of the modern world, evolved its current form during the last 100 million years. We humans, who in just an evolutionary twinkle of an eye, emerged and learned to burn that coal, have learned to fear the bracken.

Bracken, *Pteridium aquilinum*, is the commonest fern of Europe and North America, a cosmopolitan inhabitant of woods, pastures, heath and hillsides. It is distributed in the Old World from the Equator northwards into Arctic Europe, into China, Kamchatka, Japan, the Indian subcontinent, Java, the Philippines, New Zealand; and in the New World from sub-arctic Canada southwards to Mexico.

In recent years bracken has been spreading across Britain. Farmers, conservationists and scientists have become increasingly alarmed at what they see as an invasion. For bracken is toxic: its encroachment smothers vulnerable wild plant and insect populations; it acidifies the soil and therefore the run-off water; it reduces available grazing and so changes traditional land management regimes; and its spores, now being released, have been discovered to be carcinogenic. All in all, this fern is seen by many as a dangerous agent of environmental change. Unlike invasive alien species which usually bear the brunt of ecological concerns, bracken is as native as they come. This is an invasion from within, nature's fifth column, a green and growing retribution.

There have long been attempts to control the spread of bracken by using powerful herbicides, but these have dangers of their own. A proposal for biological control using a bracken-eating moth to be introduced from South Africa was shelved because of the lack of political will to release a further uncertainty into an increasingly chaotic natural world.

But our fears about bracken are recent. There is strong archaeological evidence to suggest that the underground rhizomes by which it spreads, and the croziers (the unfurling fronds in spring), were an important part of the diet of prehistoric people. It was traditionally valued for fuel, livestock litter, thatch, compost and a host of minor uses, from rain-making to contraception. Burning bracken for potash, used in glass and soap manufacture, was a large industry in the 18th and 19th centuries. With the ending of these practices and changes in upland grazing regimes, bracken has been released to find its own level in the landscape.

This level may have something to do with the clearing of Britain's forests in ancient times. Although the trees are gone, the bracken stayed, and its encroachment marks the preparation for the forest's return. When bracken peat changes the sheep-stricken upland soils, will the trees come back again? In this hesitant moment between summer and autumn, where feelings for nature ripen, the brackeny woods and hillsides carry unimaginable pasts into the future. Should we fear this fern? Give it a thousand years.

Chess Leonard Barden

YET another invitation for the GM élite, this time from the Bank of Austria, sparked a glut of draws. As mentioned in our September 1 issue, Polgar gave a good account of herself. However, Korchnoi fared badly. The youngest GM, Peter Leko, aged 16, has been outclassed in recent events, but at Vienna he drew with both Karpov and Kramnik — and trounced the world No 5, Topalov. Leading scores were Gelfand, Karpov and Topalov 5½, Kramnik, Leko and Polgar 5, Shirov 4½.

Topalov v Leko

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 e6 is the solid play. **6 Bg5 Be6 7 a3?!** Kasparov's move, played against Dreev, who replied Bg4?! Leko is a noted openings student and produces a much better reply, aiming at fast development.

Qd7! 8 Bxf6 gxf6 9 g3 0-0-0 10 Bg2 Bg4 11 f3 Be6 12 c5 Bf5 13 b4 e5 14 Nge2 Qe6 15 dxe5 d4! For such a good tactician, Topalov's plan has gone horribly astray with a profusion of pawn moves leaving his king uncastled. Leko's d pawn now pushes into the heart of White's defences.

16 Ne4 d3 17 Nf4 d2+ 18 Kf2 If 18 Nxd2 Qxe5+ 19 Ne2 Nd4 20 Rc1 Bd3 wins at least a piece. **Qc4 19 Bh3 Bxh3 20 Nxh3 Qd4+ 21 Kg2 Nxe5 22 Qb3 Nc4 23 Rhd1 f5!** Stronger than Ne3+ winning the exchange.

24 Neg5 Rd7 25 f4 Bg7 26 Nf2 Qd5+ 27 Nf3 Bxa1 28 Rxa1 Re8! 29 Resigns. The double threat of Re3 and Ne3+ is too much.

The veteran ex-champions usually outgrade the women in Jaap van Oosterom's annual match, but Spassky & Co have lost their past three encounters. The event moves between countries and is named after a traditional local dance — the waltz in Vienna, the polka in Prague.

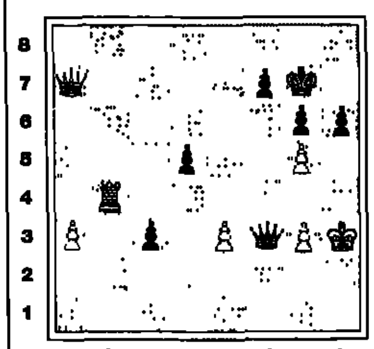
Last month's version, at the London Hilton, was named the foxtrot, a dubious title in the eyes of those who thought the quickstep or morris more appropriate.

When play started, there was a familiar step pattern as the oldies struggled. If you are over 70, the fourth and fifth hours of play can be killers, and here the world senior champion's position fades from a bright start; he opens with the Taimanov variation, but White is unimpressed.

Arakhamia-Grant v Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5 8 0-0 Nf6 9 Re1 Be7 10 e5 Nd7 11 Qg4 g6 12 Bh6 Bf8 13 Bxf8 Kxf8 14 Na4 a5 15 b3 Ba6 16 c4 Kg7 17 Rac1 h5 18 Qd4 Qb8 19 h4 Rd8 20 Qf4 Qb4 21 Re3 Qd2 22 Rc2 Qd1+ 23 Kh2 dxc4 24 bxc4 Qg4 25 Qxg4 hxg4 26 Be2 Rh8 27 Rd2 Bc8 28 Bxg4 Rxh4+ 29 Kg3 g5 30 Rd6 c5 31 Rc6 Rb8 32 Nxc5 Nxc5 33 Rxc5 Rh8 34 Rxa5 Rd8 35 Ra7 Rd4 36 Rb3 Rxb3+ 37 axb3 Rd3+ 38 f3 Rxb3 39 Rc7 Rb8 40 Bh5 Ba6 41 Bxf7 Rc8 42 Ra7 Resigns

No 2438



L Winants v G Kasparov, Brussels 1987. Kasparov (Black to move) sacrificed a rook for this position. 1 . . . c2 2 Qd4+ Kh7 3 Rb8 isn't clear, but Kasparov instead worked out a forced win several moves deep. How does your chess vision compare?

No 2437: 1 . . . h5?? loses to 2 Rxe5+ fxe5 3 Bxg5+ Kf8 4 Rxd8+ Kg7 5 Bf6+.

Quick crossword no. 331

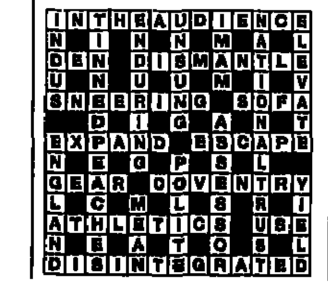
Across

1 Starched, frilled collar (4)
3 Leaflet (8)
8 Injure with fire (4)
9 Second largest ocean (8)
11 Cemetery (10)
14 Dull, of perception (6)
15 1,16's manservant (6)
17 Unprovoked attack (10)
20 Deep open chasm (8)
21 Overlook — a young lady (4)
22 Torn into strips (8)
23 Not so much (4)

Down

1,16 Defoe's castaway (8,6)
2 Savageness (8)
4 Lawsuit (6)
5 One stealing another's ideas (10)
6 Dead — slow (4)
7 Small nail (4)
10 One catching smugglers (10)
12 Something extra put in foodstuffs (8)
13 Induced sleep-like state (8)
16 (see 1 down)
18 Performs — a book of the Bible (4)
19 Carry (4)

Last week's solution



Bridge Zia Mahmood

"*TO PLAY* bridge, you need four people, a table and a pack of cards." Many beginners' texts start with this basic requirement, but I regret to announce that they're going to have to rewrite the books! At the English Bridge Union's summer meeting in Brighton, a new way to play bridge was unveiled.

British Telecom, the sponsor of the event, has added bridge to its Wireplay online service, which enables people to play games over a telephone network.

With a PC and a modem, you can log on and challenge people all over the country. The Brighton meeting, Britain's largest tournament by far, attracted more than 1,000 people over a 10-day period.

Try your skill on this deal from one of the main events, the pairs championship. Your opponents are vulnerable, you are not, and this is your hand:

♠J 10 3 ♥AJ63 ♦95 ♣K973

North on your left passes, as does your partner, and South opens with a pre-emptive bid of three clubs. That's a little surprising, since everyone at the table appears to have a bad hand!

Neither of the first two players could open, South's pre-empt would normally deny the values for a one-level opening, and you certainly don't have much. At any rate, South's opening bid is followed by two passes. Partner doubles for takeout, South passes, and you are in the hot seat. What call do you make?

South	West	North	East
		No	No
3♣	No	No	Dble
No	?		

Your choice is between three hearts and pass. Your opponents are vulnerable, remember, so if you can defeat three clubs doubled by a trick, you will score 200, normally an excellent result at pairs on a part-score deal. But will your passed partner turn up with enough to help you take five tricks in defence? Maybe three hearts is safer — after all, takeout doubles are meant to be taken out. What's your decision?

Suppose you decide to pass. You lead the nine of diamonds — a diamond ruff is likely to be your best chance of extra tricks — and this dummy appears:

North
♠AK974
♥1074
♦J873
♣Q

West
♠J 10 3
♥AJ63
♦95
♣K973

Your partner wins your diamond lead with the king and returns a low heart. Declarer, South, plays the king, which you win with the ace. You play a second diamond to your partner's ace, declarer following with the queen. Partner cashes the king of hearts and leads a small diamond, and declarer ruffs with the ten of clubs. Over to you. If you overruff with the king of clubs, you will beat the contract and score the "magic 200" — but you can do no more, for declarer's hand is:

♠Q ♥K5 ♦Q6 ♣AJ 1086542

If, on the other hand, you refuse to overruff, you will later make two trump tricks with the K9 over declarer's jack for a miraculous 500. If you passed all the tests and earned your top score — well played!

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 15 1996

Robert the Bruce surrenders his heart

Erlend Clouston

PATRIOTIC pulses beat a little faster in Scotland last week as the vital organ of a national hero made a veiled appearance on a laboratory table.

Under the glare of television spotlights, the heart of Robert the Bruce, which spent much of the early 14th century eluding English broadswords, surrendered tamely to the respectful hacksaws of Historic Scotland conservators.

The 160-minute operation, witnessed anxiously by the Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, followed the discovery of a heart-sized container at Melrose Abbey in the Borders.

As Bruce, Scotland's monarch from 1306 to 1329, is the only man known to have been granted a coronary crypt at the 12th century abbey, the assumption is that the battered, off-brown canister belongs to him.

Good taste and hygiene restrained Historic Scotland staff from penetrating the leaden shroud in which the lump of mummified muscle is encased.

The victor of Bannockburn died from leprosy, or possibly syphilis, so the archaeo-carpenters donned overalls, gloves and face masks to extract what looked like a 12in high medieval traffic cone from the official biscuit tin in which an earlier excavation team had rehoused the relic in 1921.

There was momentary excitement when the initial fibrescope examination revealed the presence of a folded piece of white parchment. Hopes that this might be a message from beyond the grave, or even a treasure hunt clue, were dashed when it turned out to contain a copper calling card from the Ministry of Works.

The half-expected rediscovery has been a mixed blessing for Historic Scotland's excavators. On top of overshadowing more archaeologically significant work at the abbey, it has made the government department sensitive to possible charges of grave-robbing. Officials stressed that there would be no attempt to clone a new King Robert from DNA scrapings and that the heart would be reburied decorously at Melrose in the spring.

A non-metallic coffin is likely so that, in the words of the Historic Scotland spokesman, "no one with a metal detector or spade can dig it up".

The canister containing Bruce's heart PHOTO: MURDO MacLEOD

Lettter from Egypt Siona Jenkins

Desert foxes

WATCHING the sun filter through the palm fronds on a spring afternoon, I sip strong sweet tea and take in the vista: fields of wheat and clover in the shadow of the temple, all dominated by the desert mountains a few hundred metres away.

My reverie is abruptly interrupted by our neighbour, Hag Ahmed, who wants my opinion on the village's latest controversy. "Ya Siona, do you think they can move everyone into the desert?"

"Let them try," shouts the old patriarch before I can answer. "No one will go live in their concrete boxes."

Like everyone else on Luxor's West Bank, once the necropolis of ancient Thebes, Hag Ahmed is talking about the government's plans to move villagers from their homes in what has been designated a "protected antiquities zone" to a new purpose-built village in the desert.

The official reason for the move is that the antiquities are being damaged or even stolen by the local people. In some hamlets of Gurna houses are built directly over ancient tombs and the villagers are known in the popular Cairene imagination as the descendants of ancient tomb robbers.

But in our village, Kom Lolah, there are no tombs. Most of the houses stand near the mortuary temple of Ramses III, Medinat Habu. The consensus among Hag Ahmed and his neighbours, most of whom are members of his extended clan, is that the bureaucrats in Cairo simply want them out of the way so that tourists won't see the poverty in which they live.

And they are adamant about staying put. "How am I going to reach my fields if I'm living out in the desert?" asked Umm Muhammed, a cousin of Hag Ahmed. "Who's going to help me carry back the clover to feed my animals?"

Rumours of the impending move have been circulating in Kom Lolah for months. A year or so ago earnest young graduates from Cairo went from door to door taking the dimensions of each dwelling and asking people to describe their ideal house.

Then several hundred two-room domed concrete boxes appeared on the barren desert site where the new village is to be built. They had little in common with the large extended family homesteads that people traditionally inhabit and heightened the already considerable suspicion among the villagers that they were being sent off out of sight to a slum in the desert.

So Hag Ahmed and the other villagers are doing what they have always done when Cairene bureaucrats interfere with their lives — sitting back and waiting.

This strategy proved effective in the past. Attempts to move Gurna away from the tombs started in the forties, when Egypt's most famous architect, Hassan Fathi, built New Gurna. Although it was internationally recognised as an architectural masterpiece, the Gurnawis were not impressed and few left their homes.

More recently, local residents gave the government a taste of what could happen if it tried to force the issue. The authorities are extremely sensitive to any threat to Egypt's tourism industry, which is just recovering from three bad years caused by Islamist unrest. When the police were brought in to demolish one of several thousand illegal new buildings in Gurna in April, hundreds of villagers blocked the roads. Coachloads of tourists were unable to reach the area's archaeological sites and the police beat a hasty retreat under a hail of stones.

In the many afternoons spent sitting against the mudbrick wall of Hag Ahmed's house sipping tea, my husband and I have spent long hours discussing crop prices, being tested on the Coptic calendar (which Upper Egyptian farmers still use for agricultural purposes) and lectured about the best way to grow wheat.

But talk always returns to the land. Who bought which piece, the rise and (occasional) fall of prices, inheritance disputes, different types of ownership, the pros and cons of formal registration (which is rarely done). Land is wealth, pride, reputation, everything — even when it is just a tiny plot that doesn't produce enough to feed your family.

As I drain the teacup the talk turns to the relative merits of customary versus civil land registration, and whether the government can turn tenants off its land. Hag Ahmed launches into detailed description of how legal precedent has worked in the tenant's favour. Illiteracy notwithstanding, he knows the minutiae of land law and price fluctuations better than most bureaucrats.

The planners in Cairo don't know what they're up against.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***I WOULD* like to go on Mastermind but I don't have a specialist subject. Which topic of research would give people the impression that I've spent years in a library, while consuming the least time to master?**

THE success story of the Tory government.— *Markus Rüttermann, Bochum, Germany*

TRY: 1) yourself; 2) accurate unemployment statistics from 1979 to 1996; 3) the successful war on poverty/drugs/crime/pollution, etc. — *Tony Beswick, Tapton, Chesterfield*

***ARE* Britons hygenically any worse off than their European neighbours as a result of the absence of a bidet in the bathroom?**

I REMEMBER, as a 13-year-old on a first school-trip to France, being informed by our rather red-faced PE teacher that the washbasin in our hotel bathroom was for washing "down as far as possible and up as far as possible", while the strange "dry loo without a lid" was for "washing the possible". We actually used it for washing our aching feet at the end of the day, our underwear or even our hair — anything but the intended. I can't help thinking that, hygiene or not, Britons lack the "possibilities". — *Francesca Gardiner, Piacenza, Italy*

***WHY* do Mexican waves invariably travel in an anti-clockwise direction? Is this phenomenon reversed in the southern hemisphere?**

THAT is strange. I, too, thought that Mexican waves invariably travel in an anti-clockwise direction. Perhaps your television set is upside down. — *Neil Solomon, Auckland, New Zealand*

***WHAT* is the origin of the term cocktail?**

THE TERM "cocktail" to mean a mixed drink was not used before the latter part of the 19th century. It was first used in New Orleans to indicate a colourful appetiser created from the local bourbon whiskey. A little bitters, a bit of sugar, a twist of lemon peel, a maraschino cherry added to the whiskey and a little ice in a short glass made a colourful mélange. Half a slice of orange hung on the rim of the glass gave it the name. Subsequent development of other strong appetiser variations such as the "Manhattan" left the original cocktail with the name that still serves it today — the Old Fashioned. — *Pierce Fenhagen, Rawdon, Quebec, Canada*

Any answers?

IF* it were possible for a big spaceship to reach the point in the universe where the Big Bang occurred, what would it find there now? —** ***H A Haley, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria

WHAT* is the most commonly believed untruth? —** ***Chris Pontac, London

IS MIDNIGHT* 12pm or 12am? —** ***Roy Nicol, Toronto, Canada

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. Readers with access to the Internet can browse through and respond to Notes & Queries via the new site at http://go2.guardian.co.uk/nq/

A Country Diary

Hugh Bowles

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA: Heat from the Mojave desert, cool from the Pacific ocean: these are the rival air currents of southern California's inland valleys. In summer the capricious nature of the breeze has us reeling and rejoicing in turn. The ground is baked, the stream beds dry and the water conservation ponds, designed to replenish the aquifers during the rainy season, have shrunk. Little grows, the plants of the chaparral go dormant, many shedding their leaves. Only the oaks and sumacs are prepared to hold on to their deep green foliage and slug it out with the heat.

Yet a walk in the arroyo on a cool morning, before the sun poked its harsh gaze over the San Gabriel mountains, brought much pleasure. The changing air brushed over my skin and a light dew lay on the ground and drew intoxicating scents from the pot-pourri of fallen sage leaves and artemisia. Walking down the stony path, I saw quail feeding on the track below. Swallows vied for air space over the last of the water while a heron stood below them, still as a garden ornament. A red-tailed hawk glided on to a telegraph pole from where he eyed the canyon floor for a breakfast of rabbit or snake. Perennial lupins, shrivelled after their grand show in the spring, stood in the gravel catching drops of water in the crease of their browned leaves, holding them like jewels.

Compared with the verdure of spring the landscape looked dishevelled. Yet the cool morning carried the reminder that autumnal mists and rain would refresh the slopes.

Theatre reviews

Poliakoff's shining return

Blinded by the Sun

Lyn Gardner

THERE is something positively Jacobean about Stephen Poliakoff's latest play at London's National Theatre, half mystery thriller and half revenge tragedy and always wholly compelling even when it seems intent on winding itself into intricate knots.

The Latin inscription at the entrance to Magdalen College Oxford's old Daubeney science laboratory — "without experiment it is not possible to know anything adequately" — dominates the stage, conjuring up a university's shabby chemistry department with a glorious past but uncertain future.

In a final act of either inspiration or revenge, the retiring head of department appoints Al, an unsuccessful scientist but efficient administrator, as his successor. Al's mission is to reinvent the department, attracting sponsorship and students. But he doesn't count on the intransigence of Christopher and Elinor, who pursue their own scientific research with an apparent ruthless purity of purpose.

Scientists, suggests one character, are the conjuror's favourite audience because they believe everything they see. So it proves as Christopher announces he has developed the sun battery — an endless source of non-polluting energy. Everyone has reasons for wanting to believe him, but it is Al who turns detective and unravels a kind of truth. A kind of truth because, as in all Poliakoff's work, the truth is a slippery, squidgy thing that it is difficult to get a firm grasp on and which is almost entirely a matter of perspective.

Al may convince himself that the colour-coded evidence he keeps in plastic bags constitute the real story of what happened but, as Elinor points out, you cannot reduce everything to nice neat patterns. We never know for certain that Christopher's discovery was fraudulent, and in the wake of what becomes known as "the occurrence", Al prospers, building a successful career as a popular science pundit. He ends up destroying the past while paying lip service to its traditions. The old chemistry lab is pulled down to make way for a department of media studies.

On its simplest level, Poliakoff tells a gripping story of scientific fraudulence and the changing face of modern research in a free market economy where ideas and discoveries only have any currency if they are marketable. But the play goes far deeper than that, investigating the selective nature of memory and the relativity of truth, and serving as a metaphor for the way we make biased selections from, or falsify, the past in order to construct an acceptable future for ourselves.

It is beautifully acted by Frances de la Tour as the ageing Elinor, a dinosaur in the new scientific world, Duncan Bell as the suave, self-deceiving Christopher and most of all by Douglas Hodge who suggests that behind Al's flabby exterior and lazy vowels there may be a steely brain. A welcome return to the National and form for Poliakoff.

Sheep might fly . . . Robert Wilson's stunning setting for Four Saints In Three Acts PHOTO: MURDO MacLEOD

Give the man a halo

OPERA
Andrew Clements

VIRGIL THOMSON, composer and vitriolic critic, died in 1989 at the age of 93. He had combined his two trades for most of his life, but he is best remembered now for his writing, witty and often cruelly partisan; the most enduring of his music was his early work, composed in Paris between 1925 and 1940, and the most famous of those pieces was his first collaboration with Gertrude Stein, the opera Four Saints In Three Acts.

Houston Grand Opera marked Thomson's centenary earlier this year with a new production of Four Saints, and now brings it to Edinburgh for four performances. Director, designer and general moving spirit behind this remarkable show is Robert Wilson, who cherished the idea of staging the piece for almost 30 years before Houston finally gave him the right opportunity.

It is a perfect vehicle for Wilson's stage magic — an opera with no narrative thread, almost no plot, and a structure that subverts the whole notion of dramatic form: despite the title there are four acts, elided and overlapped, with scenes sometimes reduced to a single line or repeated and re-ordered. And Thomson's score, wry and unportentous, with Erik Satie as its guardian angel, catches the tone of Stein's text perfectly.

Wilson's production discards most of the scant staging information the libretto provides to create a dramatic world that counterpoints Stein's and Thomson's perfectly. Each character is given his or her own exquisitely drawn and coloured image out of some Oz-like fantasy world, their movements mapped in slow-motion choreography, while dream-like symbols weave around them. It is beguiling, entrancingly lit and often very witty; if Wilson's treatments of mainstream operas in the past have often seemed achingly laboured and po-faced, Four Saints appears to have allowed him to relax and enjoy himself.

That enjoyment certainly gives the Houston performance a real sense of enthusiasm. It's impossible to imagine Four Saints better, more convincingly presented than it is here; the leading performers — Ashley Putnam, Sanford Sylvan, Gran Wilson, Marietta Simpson and Wilbur Pauley — sing their lines stylishly and meaningfully, as if Stein's litany of *non sequiturs* was as potent as a libretto by Da Ponte or Boito; the chorus move with well-oiled elegance, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Richard Bado is crisp and attentive. It may not be an opera to experience more than once, but Wilson's exceptional visual imagination casts a spell which lasts at least for the 90-minute duration of this show.



Visual feast that goes cold

Elsinore

Michael Billington

UNDONE by technical gremlins in Edinburgh, Robert Lepage's Elsinore goes without a hitch at Oslo's National Theatre. It is being presented as a visiting addition to the city's International Ibsen festival; but I have to say that, for all its visual virtuosity, Lepage's two-hour solo Shakespeare show left me stone cold.

Lepage is undeniably a master magician but his gifts, I believe, are best deployed on works that deal with Expressionist essences: witness his astonishing version of Strindberg's Dreamplay set in a revolving tube or his double bill of Bluebeard's Castle and Erwartung which played brilliantly with distorted planes and surfaces. But his hi-tech version of Hamlet reduces the play to a box of tricks in which the human dilemma is upstaged by Lepage's visual ingenuity.

We are confronted by three movable walls on to which video images are projected. Indeed the opening credits are flashed on to them as if we were at the movies. But the middle wall is a rotating rectangle which shifts constantly from the horizontal to the vertical and which contains a central aperture leading to all manner of *trompe-l'oeil* effects: at one time the bearded, long haired, booted Lepage rises through it to emerge swathed in a billowing white gown that transforms him into Ophelia.

Lepage's overall point, I assume, is that Elsinore is a place of dreams and illusions and that there is something androgynous about Shakespeare's creative nature. But the brute reality is that Elsinore is a place of political intrigue and espionage, for much of the time on a war-footing with Norway. Although one of the key themes is Hamlet's sexual uncertainty, Lepage's determination to shift between male and female characters tells us more about his own versatility than Shakespeare's polymorphous perversity.

The focus is less on what is being said than on Lepage's cleverness in solving the sundry technical problems. He communes with Horatio by means of a shadow-image. In a duologue with Claudius he swivels a table to become each character in turn. In the duel he combines use of a double with quick changes and a filmic image seen from the point of view of a rapier-tip. But however much he rings the costume changes, the characters all end up sounding like Lepage. Text is subordinated to image, idea to effect, and the chemistry of interplay between actors to the faint narcissism of solo display.

Of course, Lepage is a visual wizard but his genius is at its best when he is exploring his French-Canadian roots or when applied to 20th century Symbolist works. His work on Shakespeare, however, from his wet Dream to his foreshortened Coriolanus, always seems emotionally underpowered. In Elsinore, for all the breathtaking skill of Carl Fillion's design, he seems to be holding the mirror up to art rather than to Nature.

Out of breath in Hong Kong

CINEMA
Jonathan Romney

IMAGINE this, in distorting wide-angle. Cool customer wearing shades walks in slow motion along the corridors of a Hong Kong gambling house, trailed by a hand-held camera . . . No one looks up as he walks in . . . But suddenly he has both guns out, and bodies are diving to the floor, with blood gushing into the air and (really novel, this) actually on to the lens . . . What should be the next thing you see? A freeze-frame, with a little logo in the corner reading Levis or Marlboro?

If Fallen Angels isn't yet a cigarette ad, it soon will be. Director Wong Kar-Wai is fated to be the most imitated film stylist of the next few years — and the style of Fallen Angels is so extreme, so definitive, that he could easily end up his own most assiduous imitator. It almost looks that way already — this could be the work of someone who fell in love with his last film, the delirious Chungking Express, and decided to push its style to the utmost.

Fallen Angels is a nocturnal follow-up to Chungking Express, and by night, it's only natural things should be a little unclear. There isn't so much a narrative as a cluster of story fragments, as characters meet, spark, part, then gaze into the neon, wondering what might have been. There's an unnamed femme fatale (Michele Reis) who works for and secretly yearns after a hired killer (Leon Lai Ming). There's a possibly unhinged man (Takeshi Kaneshiro), who forces commercial services — haircuts, ice-creams — on reluctant clients.

Unpicking the narrative is like trying to negotiate a hall of distorting mirrors, and that's exactly the visual style that Wong Kar-Wai and photographer Christopher Doyle give it. Everything is wide-angle, distorted, hand-held, speeded up or eerily slowed down. At times, you want to scream to escape.

The result is oddly alienating — you want things to settle into a clear picture, but they never do. Everything happens at one remove — all the characters forever posing for gorgeous stills, or leaving each other messages through songs on jukeboxes, as if secondhand romantic ideas were far more real than life. The femme fatale never gets near her beloved killer — she sifts through his garbage, then spends her nights alone, masturbating in a rubber dress.

This world seems rife with sex, but its erotic charge seems to lie purely in the intensity of the romanticism. Wong Kar-Wai is a fetishist for moods — a sucker for the loneliness of the long-distance hitman, or the combination of Reis's lips, a red juke-box light and a saxophone wail. If you buy into this sort of LP-sleeve imagery, you'll believe Fallen Angels is heart-wrenching; if not, it looks hollow. Wong Kar-Wai is too confident in the evocative power of a killer's slow-motion lope: mere cool has become too easy a commodity.

It comes alive when the mooning is exploded by reckless slapstick — the killer accosted on a bus by a schoolmate, or Kaneshiro's demented scenes, giving a dead pig a body massage. It's strictly comic-strip but perhaps the film is best seen as a comic strip on a fabulous scale. Wong Kar-Wai and Doyle are two flash artists, racing to produce the speediest urban graphic novel.

Fallen Angels wears itself and the viewer out, some time before the end — but for thrust, it's in a world of its own. Its director may not be the Asian Godard, but he's certainly breathless.

Shot in the head

Anybody who is anybody is in Anton Corbijn's new book of portrait photographs. **Howard Rombough** meets the man who thinks glamour is a dirty world

ANTON CORBIJN is one of the best portrait photographers around. He has shot everyone. Everyone. When the London-based Dutchman telephones, legends say "When can you come over?"

Many of them contact him with requests for shots for the mantelpiece (at no charge, of course), which is all part of jet-set etiquette. "I have a lot of friends so it's hard not to do it," Corbijn says from his office near Shepherd's Bush market. "I get a lot of money for a lot of projects — for others, none. There's a good balance."

Corbijn's latest book, Star Trak, has just been published by Art Data/Schirmer Mosel (£42). It aims to correct the misconception that Corbijn shoots only music types. They get in, too, but he also has the kings and queens of pop culture: William S Burroughs, Quentin Tarantino, Johnny Depp, Dennis Hopper, Christy Turlington.

He doesn't make people look beautiful. Some pictures are unflattering and that's the point. They bring out the human side of his subjects, hinting at complex lives full of torment, reflection or even giddiness. We see a solitary Frank Sinatra in an empty Palm Springs restaurant or Bryan Ferry unrecognisable on a Newcastle street.

Corbijn is critical of glossy studio star shots, such as those in Vanity Fair magazine. He calls them "what you see is what you get" photography because they say nothing after the first viewing. In contrast, he wants us to revisit his photographs often and catch something new each time. So he won't reveal how his photographs happen because he believes they become one-dimensional if we know their story.

He learnt his candid style in the seventies, when he was regularly given five minutes to shoot Ry Cooder or some other music celebrity for the Dutch press. He still prefers a frugal approach, dropping in with his Hasselblad and three lenses and shooting fast. The results are astounding, such as the Star Trak cover picture of Clint Eastwood at the Cannes Film Festival in 1994, when Corbijn was given one minute of the actor's time: enough to shoot one roll of film. Eastwood points an accusatory finger at the camera, daring it — and us — to make his day.

Corbijn's shots often make album covers (including U2's The Joshua Tree) and magazine spreads around the globe. He's directed more than 50 music videos (from Henry Rollins to Johnny Cash) through a production company, State, which he co-owns.

Rolling Stone magazine photo editor Jodi Peckman puts Corbijn top of her list. "His photographs are a 50-50 mix of his personal vision and style as well as bringing out emotion and feeling in his subjects. Anton always seems to find one little quirky thing about somebody."

Corbijn's often witty images shows his subjects in a new light. Glamour is not a Corbijn word. "I do love that there is something else in the picture than just a pure form," he says. "I like to get a feel across, something that can touch you. What I really like is imperfection. It's good to strive for perfection, but it's not right to get there. Imperfection is total perfection. Sometimes things are in there I didn't want, but they make the picture better in the end."

Corbijn grow up on the island of Hoeksche Waard. He went to the dentist by canoe and the flat landscape was dominated by an immense sky. You could see the church spires of neighbouring villages. His father was a minister, his mother a nurse. Things spiritual were stressed. Television, alcohol and cigarettes were banned. "It has had an influence on the way I photograph. I'm looking for the person behind the surface."

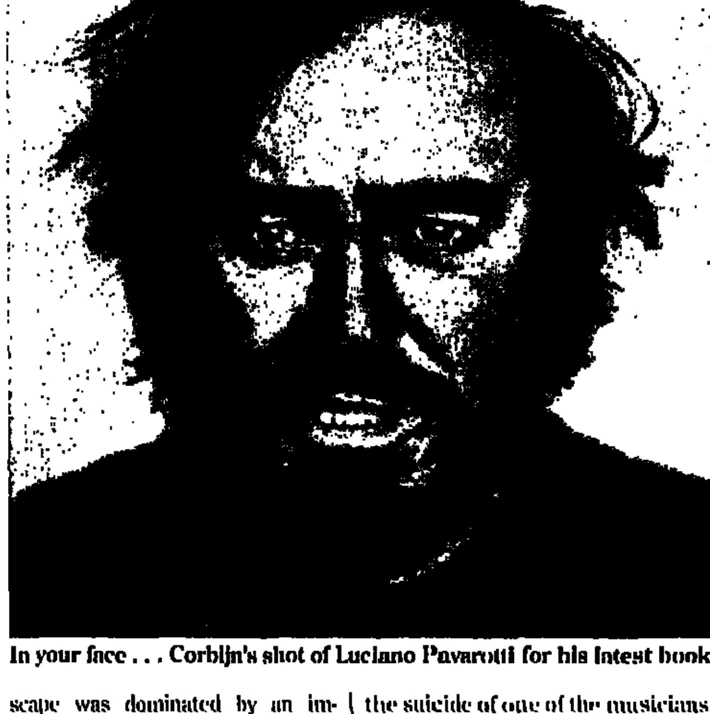
After being refused entry to art college, Corbijn studied photography at a technical school in The Hague. But music was his passion and photographing bands was a way of getting closer to the stage.

He quickly had his work published in the Dutch press. By 1979 he was chief photographer for Oor magazine; that year he moved to England and called his favourite band, Joy Division, who agreed to be photographed. Magazines weren't at all interested in his atmospheric shot of the band until the suicide of one of the musicians.

He went to NME, where editor Neil Spencer saw his talent. Within a year, he had photographed David Bowie, Mick Jagger and Captain Beefheart. By now some of his photographs have become influential images — Bowie backstage during a performance of The Elephant Man or Miles Davis with his weathered hands masking his face, which inspired an Irving Penn album cover and a Gap ad.

Corbijn has no agent and is a tough fee negotiator. As Peckman notes: "He gets a lot of these photos because there isn't so much distraction going on with his shooting, there aren't a million people running around." Corbijn himself says, "I compare myself to a guerrilla outfit. Very small. I go in and get out fast."

Howard Rombough is a contributing editor Creative Review magazine



In your face . . . Corbijn's shot of Luciano Pavarotti for his latest book

Midnight at the Megastore

POP MUSIC
Caroline Sullivan

"*DOES* anybody sell a ticket?" The two Italian girls were buttonholing everyone in the queue and being met with chilly silence. No one was about to give up a ticket to see Suede — not after traipsing into London's West End to the Virgin Megastore at midnight for this.

Impromptu one-offs in unconventional venues is a Suede speciality, but the band hadn't done one in a while. In fact, since guitarist Bernard Butler quit two years ago, they hadn't done much of anything. The free Megastore show was a way of oiling the wheels before a full tour next month. It was also a means of selling out an entire shopload of their new album, which just happened to go on sale at midnight.

If anyone was upset that pop demi-deities were dabbling in commerce, it didn't stop them nearly heaving the CD racks over to get nearer the stage. Actually, it wasn't so much a stage as a wooden triangle in a corner of the Soul & Dance department (no room in the Sexually Uncertain Britpop section, probably). The CDs in the immediate area were covered with plastic sheets — as if this lot would be tempted by Alexander O'Neal — and the fluorescent lights made it as intimate as a bus station. At least you could see which records you were squashed up against. Just as you were wondering what Mad Professor's Anti-Racist Dub Broadcasts was like, Suede appeared.

The crowd surged, and immediately revealed the disadvantages of record shop gigs. The band, only six inches higher than the audience, were invisible, and the sound echoed all the way to Heavy Rock at the far wall and back again.

But Suede were very good indeed. The acoustics rendered the music a bottomless pit of boomy noise, which happened to gel perfectly with its overblown grandeur. The seven songs were the best showcase for the Coming Up album (which everyone bought and had autographed afterwards) Suede could have wished.

Perhaps inspired by the incongruity, Brett Anderson, briefly visible as flapping black hair, was in pungent voice. Singing in a higher key than usual, he was a whiff of pre-Aids bisexual excess, virtually living out the lyrics to "Trash". They'll kill him in Texas. Lucky he's dropped the habit of spanking himself with the mike.

Most of the set were echo-laden rockers; "She" was played to the accompaniment of a phone ringing somewhere in the shop, which set things up for the autograph session. Sitting behind the table, Anderson suddenly went all blokeish, greeting fans with "Orright? 'Ow yn doin'?"

Jade, aged 16, from Sevenoaks in Kent only had eyes for teenaged guitarist Richard Oakes. "Isn't he gorgeous?" she demanded. But he's hardly lived. "That's okay, neither have I." What brilliant fun. Suede should do all their gigs this way.

Bloodsuckers for punishment

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

DR WATSON once mentioned — flinging it into the conversation like a pebble in a puddle — the Repulsive Story Of The Red Leech. He did not elaborate — the world was not yet prepared for the story.

Conan Doyle, being a medical man himself, would have been gripped by Ann Moir's rather beautiful film about leeches, Return Of The Bloodsuckers (QED, BBC1). And helplessly gripped by the Giant Leech of the Amazon.

Roy Sawyer, a bare-legged North Carolina boy, was always attached to leeches and they to him. (A leech joke is like an oncoming truck. You fight to avoid it but it still gets you.) Spurning the normal life of a North Carolina boy — being descended from the devil and called Caleb and all that — he stuck to his leeches and went to Swansea, the only university offering a PhD in leeches. Hence Christopher Logue's resonant line: "When all else fails, try Wales."

An evangelist for leeches in modern medicine, he risked everything on a leech farm. The leeches reproduced with brio but the phone never rang. Now, that really is the stuff of nightmare. Ten years later, if he is on the way to being a leech millionaire, you don't grudge the man a red cent.

Matthew Clark is a golden-looking lad. You could put him in a haystack and never find him again. When his thumb was torn off in his car engine, the artery was reconnected but the prognosis was poor. There was no circulation. It was Roy's leeches that kept the blood fluid and flowing for five days.

"I was quite frightened at first," said Matthew. "It was a weird sensation as if you could actually feel the pulsing of the leech, sucking on the blood vessel." It sounds rather like breast feeding. He slept fitfully. "I was wondering whether I was going to wake up with a leech in the bed, you know." I can imagine.

The thumb healed so perfectly you can't see the join and he is currently leading in the national rally championship.

Then Sawyer read an old paper about the Giant Leech of the Amazon. It drives a six-inch drinking straw into your body but, if you tickle its tummy, it will let go. (Is this column invaluable or what?)

Surprisingly, it is quite legal to take giant Amazonian leeches home in your suitcase. Even if it weren't, Customs wouldn't be inclined to pry.

Carl Peters, who has been working at the farm since he left school, tends them tenderly. He finds they unwind best to a bit of Bach. He swung one meditatively from a fingertip. "She's old but she's lovely, a cross between a slimy slug and Velcro. You could sit down all night in front of the TV and handle a leech. It relieves stress."

Leeches rippled across the screen fluidly, fluently. The effect was trance-like.

The Amazonian is used for medical research. Carl said: "You've bred them up. You've fed them and looked after them for perhaps a year and then they just come and take them away. You don't really want to give them up." He bit his lip.

ITS SALIVARY gland contains an enzyme that breaks down blood clots. Sawyer said: "I think the secretions from blood-sucking animals are to cardio-vascular disease what penicillin was to infectious diseases."

Look, getting back to this business of watching TV with a leech . . .

I saw Trevor Howard only once and it was, coincidentally, on a train. A tube, actually. High Barnet is a terminus where trains go to die and Howard was giving a bit of a performance. His wife was saying "Shh!" quite a lot.

I thought Victoria Wood might be interested as Howard haunted the trip she took from Crewe to Scotland in Great Railway Journeys (BBC2). Carnforth, where Brief Encounter took place, is desolate now. Coachloads of Japanese arrive and leave quite quickly. The buffy where Trevor Howard met Celia Johnson is closed.

Buffys began to obsess her. Faces started to remind her of scones. At last, at Malton she found a proper buffy. "This is better. I know we're in the North because I've spotted Swiss rolls on the counter. It's really cosy. It's called Joe's Café because Joe owns it. It's not been themed. Nobody's covered it with posters of railways disasters and called it Buffers." Chip butties were 80p which, if plural, seems very reasonable.

Joe's apart, she clearly hated every inch. The delay, the decay, the danger of dying of dehydration. Back at Crewe they were refused permission to film in the buffy. Take my tip. Never cross a comedian who has travelled from Thurso on a bunch of bananas. "Do they think the viewing public isn't ready for the vinyl banquettes, the plastic chairs painted to resemble wood grain Formica, the brimming ashtrays, the stupid bloody promotional bunting? Dismal surroundings . . . grubby lavatories . . . buttock-resistant seating . . ."

A bloke sharing her bench shot a glance sideways and offered her a shortbread. She seems to attract the sort of man who looks as if he keeps pigeons. "No, thank you," she said in a very ladylike way. Just like Celia Johnson.

Empiricists at the table

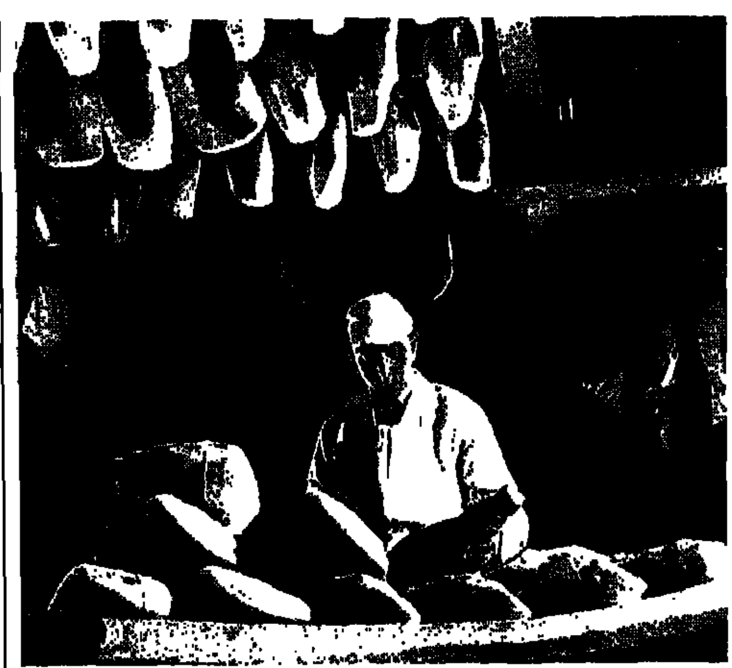
Matthew Fort

Food in England
by Dorothy Hartley
Little, Brown 676pp £22.50

DOES anyone actually know what English food is? Our culture has always welcomed and ingested culinary influences from overseas with generosity, but so numerous and rapid have the waves of gastro-invaders become that what is indigenous to these shores and natural to our heritage has been submerged beneath a succession of sundried tomatoes, extra virgin olive oils and more.

In such an embattled state it is a pleasure to turn to Dorothy Hartley's Food In England, which was first published 40 years ago. You would have to work hard to come up with a more prosaic title than that — and the title in itself is a very English conceit, for the book is filled not just with recipes for the friendly and familiar, but also with recipes for potions and pickles and magical meats. In the index you will find entries for singeing and scalding pigs, raddle marking of mutton, dolphins and Dorset moss.

The idiosyncratic structure of the book, its rambling good nature, its corners and oddities and enthusiasms, modesty and learning are quintessentially English. Food In England is as English as La Philosophie Du Gout is French. It is as representative of the English tendency



Essence of Englishness . . . Yorkshire hams are said to have taken their flavour from the oak sawdust from the building of York Minster

to cloak romantic passion with empirical detail as Brillat-Savarin's book is of the French passion for disguising sensual greed with prattling philosophical rationalism.

There can be no cloaking Dorothy Hartley's passion for food in all its aspects. Indeed, for her, food could not be divorced from the circumstances which produced it.

In the course of her researches, Hartley punctures a number of myths that have come to dominate contemporary food thought. A prime example must be the unsuitability of the Mediterranean diet as far as Britain is concerned. She makes the point that while the Saxons, Danes and Normans all left edible marks upon our culinary culture, the Romans left nothing aside from a tradition for growing vines in inappropriate places.

But it is what she has to say about our failure to nurture our own native culinary culture which is most germane. I had always subscribed to the theory that the dire state of food knowledge and appreciation in this country was the result of blockades and rationing in two world wars. Hartley believes that the process started much earlier. Once, she says, it was possible to eat quite well off a small amount of land. The Industrial Revolution put paid to all of that, and to the passing down of knowledge of husbandry and kitchen craft. Successive generations of cooks and food writers have filled this vacuum with missionary zeal for foreign food and recipes.

It is tempting to suggest that the patron saint of post-war food writing, Elizabeth David, in spite of her late conversion to the cause of British cooking, did more to set about the destruction of our own culinary culture than anyone else. On reflection, she was more of a fifth columnist, clearing the way for the big commercial battalions to thunder in after.

Has the food of England any future? Small congregations of British food votaries do still gather to celebrate the steak and kidney pudding and the Bakewell tart, but in truth this is no more than culinary archaeology. If British, or English, cooking is really going to enjoy a proper revival, it must reinvent itself — in the same way that French food has reinvented itself so successfully over the past 100 years.

Food In England can be ordered at the discount price of £18 from Books@The Guardian Weekly

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Emeric Pressburger: the Life and Death of a Screenwriter, by Kevin Macdonald (Faber, £12.99)

STRANGE, that an immigrant Hungarian Jew should have done so much to shape our vision of ourselves; not so strange that it was his collaborator, Michael Powell, who was given so much of the credit. This magnificent biography (by EP's grandson) pays full attention to his achievement: it was Pressburger, we learn, who was primarily responsible for what made their films so special. A mine of useful information, and, in describing Pressburger's vision, humanism and courage, very moving indeed.

Whit, by Iain Banks (Abacus, £6.99)

ODD, engaging novel about the adventures of a member of a loopy Scottish Amish-like sect, set adrift in the big bad world to find her missing cousin. Cue unworldly yet spunky innocence rubbing up against dope, porn videos, New Agers, squats, mobile phones and leather trousers. It's actually good fun, and surprisingly good-natured and tolerant, without any typically Banksian gross-out.

God: A Biography, by Jack Miles (Simon & Schuster, £9.99)

ONCE you accept the premise that the God of the Old Testament can be treated as a literary character, then things begin to fall into place. Miles's reading of the Tanakh — the OT in its proper, Jewish, order — amending the odd crucial mistranslation, is revelatory. The Church of England God — that inoffensive celestial social worker of indeterminate gender — is unrecognisable. What we have here is the real thing, a personality split uneasily between creator and fiend, a being worthy of our terror but not our respect — and, ultimately, a vast, reverberating silence.

Beyond a Boundary, by C L R James (Serpent's Tail, £8.99)

TO SAY "the best cricket book ever written" is pifflingly inadequate praise. A mental landscape triangulated by literature, socialism and cricket represents an ideal we should all aspire to, and this ennobling and beautifully written book should be read by anyone with the slightest interest in any one of the above (even interest in *only* one of the above). If the England team were made to read it, not only would they come away with a greatly deepened understanding of West Indian history, but their IQs would leap up 30 points; and they'd never lose a match again. Maybe.

Good fairy, bad habit

Philip Pullman

The Natural History of Make-Believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britain, Europe and America
by John Goldthwaite
Oxford 386pp £20

THERE is a comfortable view of children's literature which holds that the best of it is British — and the best of all is that produced in a Golden Age which lasted from Alice to Winnie The Pooh. Sage commentators have always looked further and seen more, but the comfortable view exemplifies the regrettable tendency of a certain section of the British — more precisely, English — middle classes to overestimate their own charm.

But here is a book with a different view, and with a moral. The moral is that "Make-Believe can be an education in the fullness of reality or a schooling in intellectual fraud" — and John Goldthwaite means it. Make-Believe is not frivolous — or if it is, then it will teach a frivolous attitude to life. And it's very old: he traces it back to the Book of Proverbs, and relates it firmly and intriguingly to the (female) Wisdom of God, the Sophia, who turns up in various guises. Mother Goose, Cinderella's Fairy Godmother and Pinocchio's Blue Fairy, for example, are all avatars of this principle.

In the course of this excursion through the world of Make-Believe, Goldthwaite flushes out some monsters, the ugliest of whom by some way is C S Lewis. Lewis was "either the most obtuse children's author who ever lived or the most fatuous. If the latter, the word evil springs to mind, and, if not evil, then certainly the word shame." Tolkien fares little better: "Very seldom does one encounter emotion this fraudulent and writing this bad in any genre." All perfectly true.

He finds the heart of children's literature in Pinocchio. He claims: "what we have here, addressed to the understanding of children, is . . . a literature of the Holy Ghost". He's not inviting us to succumb to religiosity: he's demanding that we take it seriously. In Pinocchio he finds the most passionate and graceful (grace-full) of all children's books, one in which moral truth and comic invention run along so closely together that it's hard to tell which is which.

There are brilliant insights in every chapter. Time and again he pins down a writer with an accurate skewer: "Andersen was not a children's author, I think, but someone pretending to be a gifted child in order to impress the grown-ups with his skills." But what most impresses is the moral passion that informs the book. Profound, important and true, this is the work of a wise and imaginative reader who knows that books teach and that we had better be serious about children's books, because they teach more profoundly than most.

Chronicle of a drift right

Maya Jaggi

Death in the Andes
by Mario Vargas Llosa
Faber 276pp £15.99

Making Waves
by Mario Vargas Llosa
edited and translated by John King
Faber 360pp £20

IN 1983 Mario Vargas Llosa, star among Latin American boom novelists and later the nearly man of Peru's 1990 presidential race, accepted his first political commission. He was sent to help investigate the mysterious deaths of eight journalists in the Andes, in terrain inhabited by Quechua Indians and bloodily contested by Maoist Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas and counter-insurgency forces, or *sinchis*.

Death In The Andes draws obliquely on that trip. At a remote Andean camp for workers building a sierran highway, and in an atmosphere of growing menace, a pair of Civil Guards probe three disappearances — of a mute, an albino and an ex-mayor. The bafflement of the stolid Corporal Lituma (whom Vargas Llosa aficionados will recognise from earlier novels) is spliced with the Senderistas' trail of brutality — as viewed by the missing men, by tourists stoned to death, and by villagers set upon each other through fear, ancient grievances and "darker motives".

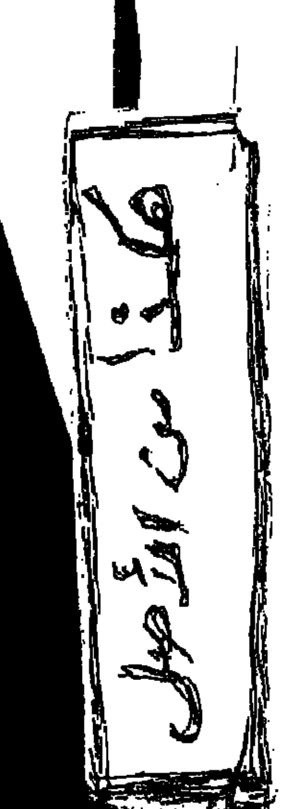
Vargas Llosa alternates this catalogue of violence with erotic reminiscences from Lituma's broken-hearted colleague, Tomás Carreño. Once a drug baron's bodyguard who stole his boss's girl, Carreño's romantic idealism comically frustrates the coarse Lituma, who is forever egging him on to lewd disclosures. Lituma grows to suspect the bisexual bar owner Dionisio and his "witch" wife Adriana, who run an orgiastic cult of drunken self-abandonment. They lead astray locals obsessed with *apus* — mountain gods with a thirst for blood sacrifice.

Where in his early novels he attacked the privileged for corruption, here he turns his contempt on the "backward", illiterate poor. It is almost as though the author drops his liberal veneer to curse with Lituma: "Superstitious pagan sons of bitches . . . how could they behave like naked, savage cannibals? . . . guys like these who played cards, who had been baptised."

For pre-Hispanic rites to symbolise the Sendero Luminoso's orgy of bloodshed is one thing. To blame the residual beliefs of Peru's mountain Indians for that bloodshed — and, implicitly, for the wider failure of democracy — is a travesty. It suggests despair at those who cling to their own "fictions" at the expense of seeing the "truth" — Vargas Llosa's truth.

It is instructive to read the novel alongside John King's thoughtfully selected volume of essays, Making Waves. They trace an intriguing literary and political trajectory, from Vargas Llosa's youthful backing of the Cuban revolution, through his rightward drift to a form of Andean Thatcherism, his campaign platform.

In his account of the 1983 Andes investigation, he registers palpable shock at encountering the "otherness" of Peru's unassimilated Indians. Yet why, he concedes, should they have faith in a "rule of law" which its corrupt officers have persistently weighted against them? Sadly, that insight is lost in his latest, bleak parable.



Down to earth mother

Maya Jaggi on a writer who challenges notions of sexuality, motherhood and mother countries

AFTER a bloodily self-inflicted but triumphant abortion, the heroine of Jamaica Kincaid's third novel prophesies: "I would bear children but I would never be a mother to them . . . I would bathe them at noon in a water that came from myself, and I would eat them at night, swallowing them whole, all at once."

Kincaid, whose home is in the United States but whose semi-autobiographical fiction returns to her native Caribbean, has dwelt obsessively on the love-hate attrition between mother and daughter. Admirers of her stark yet lyrical prose include Susan Sontag, Salman Rushdie and the Nobel poet laureate Derek Walcott — to whom her new novel, The Autobiography Of My Mother, is dedicated.

At the house in Bennington, Vermont, that she shares with her husband, composer Allen Shawn, and their two children, Kincaid says the novel was sparked by a realisation that her own mother "should never have had children". The thought came as she watched her mother nurse her step-brother, who died in January of Aids, aged 33. "It was wonderful to see how kind she was to my brother when he was dying," she says, then with venom adds: "She loves us when we're dying — not when we're thriving because then we don't need her."

Kincaid retains the English accent of her upbringing in colonial Antigua, the island she left 30 years ago, aged 17. Nearly 6ft tall, she has the direct gaze of someone with ample faith in herself. She quit her job as a staff writer at the New Yorker last November in a high-profile row with editor Tina Brown ("a bully yellow-haired high-heeled woman from England"), who she feels lowered the magazine's literary tone with an influx of celebrities. The last straw was Brown's choice of TV personality Roseanne to guest-edit a women's issue.

Her self-confessed "narcissism" on arrival in New York in the 1960s — bleached hair, an extrovert wardrobe — was in revolt against low expectations. As the eldest of four, and the only girl, she was apprenticed to a seamstress, then plucked from school, where she was excelling, and sent to the US as an au pair ("really a servant") — a period vitriolically captured in her second novel, Lucy (1990).

A chance meeting opened doors at the New Yorker — "a privileged place dominated by white men from Harvard and Yale, so I was Exhibit A" — and she subsequently married the editor's son.

In her New Yorker stories, which grew into the collection At The Bottom Of The River (1978) and the novel Annie John (1983), a young girl's ties to her mother and her island begin to suffocate her. Harshly guarding her against "the slut you are so bent on becoming", the mother trains her doting child to be servile and ladylike. In A Small Place (1988), a diatribe on Antigua's corrupt legacy addressed to the incoming tourist, Kincaid asks: "Do you ever wonder why some people blow things up?"

Reviews were harsh: "One of the most frightening things for any victor is to have the victim articulate the injustice," says Kincaid. "So what better than to dismiss it as anger — it's nothing, a sulk."

Her latest hypnotic monologue is a study of power and powerlessness distilled into crystalline prose. Like Kincaid's own mother, the narrator, 70-year-old Xuela Claudette Richardson, is a Dominican whose mother was a Carib Indian and her father a policeman. Xuela's mother dies giving birth to her, and her father bundles her off, along with his soiled clothes, to be wet-nursed by his laundry woman. Seduced by a married friend of her father, Xuela takes control through a curious sexual detachment and by refusing to keep his child. She then seduces and marries a white doctor, Philip.



Kincaid: 'Powerlessness is the point of obsession for me'

Kincaid insists her subject is not race. "I assume blackness is extremely normal. Powerlessness is the point of obsession for me. But anybody can be powerless, regardless of their complexion." Xuela is, though, a metaphor for the African diaspora. "For Africans, Africa died the minute they were born into the new world. I'm always thinking about a larger something when I write — how a large event operates within a single person." Yet that symbolism can make the desolately self-willed Xuela unreal. "She is a character in a limited sense," Kincaid admits, "not as in, say, 19th century literature, like Balzac. She's more mythic and her world is reduced."

Combining authorship with children, she feels writing has made sense of her upbringing: "If one repeats one's childhood, I'd have had a miserable life. But I fell in love wisely: I marvel at my ability to be kind to myself."

The Autobiography of my Mother is publisned by Vintage, priced £8.99

Fighting race relations

Margaret Busby

Ethiopian Stories
by George Schuyler compiled and edited by Robert A. Hill
Northeastern University Press £14.95

Compositions in Black and White: The Life of Phillippa Schuyler
by Kathryn Talalay
Oxford University Press £18.99

HARLEM'S answer to H L Mencken, the African-American journalist and satirist George S Schuyler, was by the time of his death in 1977 a rightwing extremist who had alienated much of the black community with views that were antipathetic to the nationalistic and civil rights movements. Yet his career had socialist beginnings. Attempts to explain the trajectory of his life have labelled him an assimilationist, but on the evidence of his writings a more complex and enigmatic personality was involved.

Born in 1895 to parents whose pedigree, he claimed, had bypassed enslavement, he served eight years in the army, followed by periods as a clerk, porter, dishwasher, cleaner, labourer, stevedore and hobo, before joining the radical black magazine The Messenger, from 1923 until 1928. Indelibly associated with the "Harlem Renaissance", the surge in African-American arts and letters of the 1920s, Schuyler in his most notorious essay, "The Negro-Art Hokum" published in the Nation in 1926, was decidedly unsympathetic to the idea of a distinct black American culture and aesthetic, arguing that the African American is "merely a lampblacked Anglo-Saxon".

Iconoclastic racial themes figure not just in Schuyler's journalism and criticism but also in his fiction. His hilarious satire Black No More (1931; Northeastern University Press, 1989) lampoons major black figures such as W E B DuBois and Marcus Gardey, while ridiculing American "colorphobia". The plot concerns a black scientist who invents a process that whitens dark skin. Chaos ensues when the entire black population takes advantage of it; the problem is, the transformed Blacks are a shade whiter than Caucasians. So an absurd new racism arises, since being ultra-pale betrays the possession of black blood.

The outcome of his attempt to translate ideology into life emerges from Kathryn Talalay's poignant biography of his concert-pianist daughter Philippa Duke Schuyler, Composition In Black And White. In 1928 George Schuyler married Josephine Cogdell, a blonde, blue-eyed Texas heiress and granddaughter of slaveowners. They both believed intermarriage would "invigorate" the races, producing extraordinary offspring. Their only child, born in 1931, seemed to embody this theory: she could read and write at the age of two, play the piano at four, had composed more than 200 musical works by the age of 11 and performed at Carnegie Hall at 12. As a prodigy, Philippa received phenomenal attention from the US media. As a mature artist she had to contend with the double jeopardy of race and gender in the élitist US classical music milieu; so she travelled constantly abroad, performing for presidents and monarchs in some 50 countries. Her ostensibly glamorous life, however, hid a deep unhappiness: "I am a beauty — but I'm half coloured so I'm not accepted anyplace. I'm always destined to be an outsider."

Desperately trying to reinvent herself, Philippa Schuyler began to "pass" for white. Writing from Europe to her mother she demanded to be omitted from her father's manuscript-in-progress, The Negro In America: "Get me OUT of that book. Everyone here thinks of me as Latin, and that's the way I want it. Anyone who had any paternal sentiments would want a child to escape suffering . . . I am not a Negro, and won't stand for being called one. . . It makes all future effort on my part to forge a worthwhile niche for myself in society where I will be accepted as a person not as a strange curiosity useless."

In 1966, she told friends: "My father's way-out extreme right conservatism has been an extra factor in segregating me. For some reason, he has chosen to be politically on the same side of the fence as the most prejudicial whites in this country . . . He attacks in his columns the people who might help me and is friendly with the people who won't have me."

Later that year, she went to perform in Vietnam, and the experience prompted a racial reawakening which caused her to write to her father: "I am not going to cravenly accept segregation. Nor will I bring up any child into segregation."

It was to be her last letter. Three days later on May 9 1967, aged 35, Philippa Duke Schuyler was one of three passengers killed in a helicopter crash north of Da Nang.

But perhaps the epitaph for Schuyler's perversely unpredictable stance lies in an observation by historian John Henrik Clarke: "George got up in the morning, waited to see which way the world was turning, then struck out in the other direction."

Five Easy pieces

Lucretia Stewart

A Little Yellow Dog
by Walter Mosley
Serpent's Tail 266pp £12.99

WHEN I had finished reading A Little Yellow Dog, I went out and got all four of Walter Mosley's previous Easy Rawlins novels and read them straight through. I had loved A Little Yellow Dog and I wanted to see if the others were as good. If I say that they are, it doesn't mean that Mosley isn't getting better. To write five novels about a character as interesting and complex as Easy and never to flag, never to miss a beat, is pretty amazing; when you take in that it isn't just Easy who is brilliantly portrayed but also his friend, Mouse, and a whole host of other subsidiary characters who reappear throughout the oeuvre, Mosley's achievement becomes even more impressive.

The Easy Rawlins novels to date are set between 1948 (Devil In A Blue Dress), when Easy has just come out of the army, and 1963 (A Little Yellow Dog) when Kennedy is in the White House. Life has never been easy for a black man in the United States and then was even less so. Easy comes from Texas and grows up expecting a hard time. He doesn't want much: a house of his own, a woman to love, a decent life for his children, enough money. But every time there is trouble, he is the obvious suspect. His personality doesn't help — he is more intelligent than is good for him and, while realistic about his own weaknesses, not so good at combatting them. He is tender-hearted, romantic, highly sexed and a little bit dishonest but then that's the way he's had to be.

The blame for much of Easy's less-than-savoury past can be laid at Mouse's door. Easy and Mouse go way back and have been in many a tight corner together. The trouble is Mouse loves to kill. Easy knows that, if he takes Mouse along, things will end in tears and worse. Someone will wind up dead. Dozens have. But sometimes he needs Mouse. Mouse is almost an alter ego, the dark side of Easy, his shadow — together they make up the man. And Mouse is married to Etta Mae whom Easy has loved and lost.

Mosley has a robust, realistic attitude to sex. In this respect he is (as writer) much like his character, "easy". Indeed, one of the joys of his writing in general is the ease that characterises every aspect of it.

A Little Yellow Dog finds Easy with a respectable job, working for the Los Angeles Board of Education as supervising senior head custodian. His old friend and partner, Mouse, has gone straight too and is working for him as a janitor. One morning when Easy turns up at 6.30 as usual at Sojourner Truth Junior High School, Mrs Idabell Turner, one of the teachers, is in unusually early. Tearfully she tells him that her husband wants to kill her dog and would Easy please, please take the dog just for a little while? Easy says no but then Idabell, all brown skin and curves, presses herself against him and shows him a wonderful time and he relents.

From then on his respectable life is threatened, Mouse comes out of retirement with predictably violent consequences and all is not well that ends badly. In Easy's world, there are no easy solutions.

Motor Racing Italian Grand Prix

Slip costs Hill vital win

Richard Williams at Monza

THE ordeal of Damon Hill continues. After taking the lead in the Italian Grand Prix on Sunday the world championship leader committed a simple mistake which cost him the outside chance of wrapping up his first title.

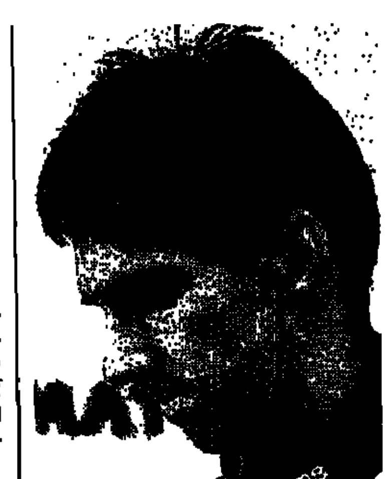
Instead he presented Michael Schumacher with an opportunity to bring the crowd to the point of delirium by giving Ferrari their first victory at Monza since 1988. The German crossed the line ahead of Jean Alesi's Benetton-Renault and Mika Hakkinen's McLaren-Mercedes.

Hill made his customary poor start from pole position, conceding the lead to Alesi. But, smarting from the humiliations of the past week, he charged back to repass the Frenchman. His lead had grown to two seconds when, at the start of the sixth lap, his car clipped the tyre barrier marking the inside of the Goodyear chicane and spun to a halt on the track.

In one sense Hill's race was over as he trudged back to the pits. In another it was very much alive, with his team-mate Jacques Villeneuve now free to eat away at Hill's 13-point lead in the championship. The Canadian failed to do so when, lying fourth, he damaged his steering in an incident on the 11th lap.

Three pit stops condemned him to seventh place, out of the points, so the two men will go to Portugal later this month separated by an unchanged margin. With only one further event left on the calendar, in Japan in mid-October, the odds have swung further in Hill's favour.

Hill was candid about the misjudgment that may have cost him his third Italian Grand Prix. "I threw it away," he admitted. "I was very pleased with the way the race was going initially and I was enjoying myself. I've only got myself to blame."


Hill: clipped tyre barrier

He came out of the race with a measure of credit among those who heard Alesi's subsequent description of their battle during the first lap when the Benetton, sixth on the grid, shot into the lead within the few seconds before the cars reached the chicane.

The vigour of Hill's counter-attack, which saw him carve past the Frenchman at the Lesmo curves and then resist Alesi's aggressive attempt to repass at the Ascari chicane, surprised and impressed his opponent.

"When Damon came by he was fighting like it was not the first lap but the last," Alesi said. "From someone who's fighting for the world championship, that surprised me. He was taking big risks."

Ninety minutes later Hill's fortunes were of little interest to the tens of thousands of flag-waving Italian fans who stormed the fences and thronged the track to welcome Schumacher to the victory rostrum.

The last time a Ferrari won at Monza, in the hands of Gerhard Berger, old Enzo Ferrari had been dead barely a month and the victory took on the elements of a valediction. Schumacher's win, by contrast, was a celebration of rebirth.

The heavily reworked F310 is far from being the best car in the field but Schumacher's genius overrides its defects. On Sunday he drove a superb strategic race, overcoming his own poor getaway to profit early on from the temporary absence of Mika Hakkinen, who went into the pits to fit a new nose assembly after hitting a tyre barrier on the third lap, and the early exit of Hill.

Holding station in second place, less than a second behind Alesi, Schumacher bided his time, waiting for the Benetton to make its pit stop. "I had quite a lot of fuel on board," he said, "and I knew I could wait until later to stop. Jean's car had a very good top speed and I couldn't overtake him, so it was the safe strategy to overtake him in the pit stops."

On lap 31 Alesi came in to take fuel and tyres in a nine-second stop. Two laps later Schumacher followed him, and so slick were his entry and exit that although the stop itself was only a fifth of a second faster he came out of the pit lane with a lead of four seconds over the Benetton.

After that he drew away, increasing his lead by an average of more than half a second a lap. Twice he improved the lap record, leaving it a fraction above 150mph, and his only alarm was caused when he momentarily lost concentration with 13 laps to go and brushed against the first pile of tyres at the very chicane where Hill had come to grief.

Cricket NatWest Trophy final Lancashire v Essex

Lancashire ride the rollercoaster

Mike Selvey at Lord's

WHEN Glen Chapple rearranged Peter Such's furniture to complete Lancashire's annihilation of Essex here on Saturday, the clock had only just reached 5.30 and there were more than a quarter of the scehduled 120 overs remaining.

Yet in the space of 87 and bit overs the crowd saw two classy sides bowled out, spectacular catches held, stumps flying, ball beating bat, grit and determination at the crease, and great tides of adrenalin washing over the ground as first Esex took control and might have expected to bat their way sensibly to a win, and then Lancashire wrested it back again before trampling their opponents into the dirt.

This was a day for the bowlers and good luck to them. NatWest finals have always carried some notoriety as the early September dew renders even the driest pitch as clammy as a politician's handshake, and with the exception of the Warwickshire-Sussex final three years ago — 642 runs for only 11 wickets — first innings have tended to be a struggle, with the toss holding sway.

But bowlers suffer too much from the artificiality of the limited-overs game, with its rigorous fielding restrictions, limit on the number of overs bowled, and narrow parameters regarding wides, so it was good to see them get their own back.

Unusually, the pitch and the atmosphere helped the ball move around all day rather than just in the morning. Lancashire, who lost the toss and batted first, made much the better use of it.

Peter Martin, bowling from the Pavilion End, the less helpful one to away-swingers, snaked the ball up the hill insidiously at times and made the early inroads into the Essex order. Later Chapple, who had found the Benson and Hedges final earlier in the year more chastening as he bowled too short, got it exactly right this time, jagging the ball exuberantly down the hill to take six for 18, the most telling figures at Lord's in the 33-year history of the competition.

By the end of the Lancashire innings, Essex were clear favourites to win the contest. Despite the loss of a key bowler, Neil Williams, with a thigh strain, they produced sufficiently accurate and intelligent bowling to trouble all the Lancashire batsmen.

Mark Ilott bowled beautifully with the new ball, castling Atherton in the process, and Ronnie Irani, found wanting with the ball in internationals, was devastating here, knocking the heart out of the Lancashire middle order. Runs were table scraps, and in that context John Crawley's 66 from 129 balls was a gourmet feast, although he was fortunate not to be leg-before to his first ball. He survived, rode his luck and gave Lancashire the bedrock of what proved a winning total.

Essex will look back on what followed with horror. They missed Stuart Law, certainly, but even the great Gooch, who might have been guaranteed to lead his side home, was forced instead to cling on desperately, rendered strokeless, and marooned on 10 for almost 45 minutes before Gallian's first ball hit his back leg in front of middle and off stumps.

He was seventh out, though, and had looked odds on to carry his bat as Essex — with the exception of Irani, who was torpedoed by Chapple — were genuinely bowled out. Essex's 57 is by 61 runs the lowest total made in a 60-over final: the winning margin, 129 runs, second only to the 175-run drubbing inflicted on Surrey by Yorkshire in 1965. It was an embarrassment.

Scores: Lancashire 186, Essex 57.
Lancashire won by 129 runs

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Illingworth scores appeal victory

RAYMOND ILLINGWORTH, chairman of England's selectors since March 1994 but standing down this week, can leave the game with his head held high after being cleared of bringing the game into disrepute by the Cricket Council's appeals panel at Lord's last week.

Illingworth was fined £2,000 plus £500 costs in June by the Test and County Cricket Board for making public statements "prejudicial to the interests of cricket", notably an account of his row with the then England fast bowler Devon Malcolm during the tour of South Africa last winter. He always maintained that he was exercising a reasonable right of reply to complaints by Malcolm.

Illingworth said after the Lord's decision: "I'm delighted with the result. It is a relief that everything had ended now. It has been a long, hard six months but I feel vindicated and delighted that my name has been cleared."


Illingworth: relieved

SRI LANKA, cricket's one-day wonders, gave another superb all-round performance when they defeated Australia in the World Series final at Colombo. The hosts knocked up 234 for three, with Aravinda Da Silva contributing an undefeated 75 off 64 balls. They then dismissed Australia, their victims in the World Cup final last March, for 184. Only Steve Waugh, with a determined 55, and Stuart Law, who scored 31, made any worthwhile contribution to the Australian total.

MIKE ATHERTON, who became the 71st captain of England when he took over from Graham Gooch three years ago, will lead his side on the tours of Zimbabwe and New Zealand this winter before England attempt to regain the Ashes next summer against Australia.

THE Five Nations Championship, the world's oldest Rugby Union tournament, under threat since England agreed a five-year £87.5 million television deal with BSkyB in June, has been saved. In a dramatic change of heart the other home unions have agreed a deal with the Rugby Football Union.

All Five Nations fixtures will go ahead as scheduled from January to March 1997 as part of the current agreement with the BBC, which expires in May. The RFU made major financial concessions to Wales, Scotland and Ireland during talks last week. For their part the three Celtic unions formally acknowledged England's agreement with BSkyB.

WIGAN have secured Rugby League's Premiership Trophy in great style after beating St Helens 44-14 at Old Trafford on Sunday. It was the club's third Premiership triumph in a row and it brought to an end the Saints' brave bid for the coveted treble, having already won the Super League and Challenge Cup. Wigan were determined to salvage something from the season and, led by a three-try burst from Danny Ellison, they romped to a crushing victory.

COLIN MONTGOMERIE shot an eight-under-par 63 to win the European Masters by four shots from fellow Scot Sam Torrance, at Crans-sur-Sierre, Switzerland. Montgomerie, who carded 61 in the third round, finished with a 24-under-par tournament record aggregate of 260. He also picked up a cheque for almost £128,000. It was his third European Tour victory of the year and took him back to the top of the Order of Merit.

WITH the soccer season only three weeks old, three Premiership managers and a coach are in trouble with the Football Association for berating referees. Graeme Souness, Bryan Robson, Ron Atkinson and Gordon Strachan have been charged with bringing the game into disrepute. Atkinson and Strachan, Coventry's manager and coach, have also been asked for their observations on events during the club's match at Chelsea.

MIKE TYSON destroyed Bruce Seldon in one minute 49 seconds to take the WBA heavyweight title in Las Vegas on Sunday. Tyson, the WBC champion, knocked down his opponent twice in the opening round. The referee, Richard Steele, ended the fight after Seldon took the mandatory count of eight on his feet but was still shaky. Tyson, who earned around $137,500 a second for his troubles. Next on the agenda for Tyson is Evander Holyfield. The bout, confirmed on Monday, will take place on November 9.

IT WAS happy hour for Britain's top cyclist Chris Boardman as he pedalled his way into the record books for the third time in two weeks at the Manchester Velodrome. Cheered all the way by 3,000 supporters, he smashed the world one-hour unpaced record, becoming the first man to go beyond 56km.

Boardman previously held the record in 1993 with a distance of 52.270km, but was bettered by Switzerland's Tony Rominger, who clocked up 55.29km a year later. Last week the British number one covered 220 laps for a distance of 56.38km to shatter that mark.


Flying high . . . Steffi Graf on her way to the title PHOTO: KATHY WILLENS

Another upward curve plotted on Steffi's graph

UNDER thunder clouds so intensely dark that a bat briefly flicked across court, believing night had arrived, Steffi Graf, who had timed everything to perfection all afternoon, won her fifth US Open and 21st Grand Slam tournament with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Monica Seles just before the skies opened on Sunday, *writes Stephen Bierley.*

This was not the stupendous epic of last year when Graf defeated Seles, playing her first major tournament since being stabbed in April 1993, in three electric sets. This time the electrics were of the heavenly variety.

It was, however, immensely competitive, with Seles displaying that fierce tenacity during the first set that so marked her out prior to the stabbing. When she was down she went completely for broke, and there were times when Graf was forced to concede. Not very often, though. The thought of her father Peter's trial on tax evasion charges in Germany, which opened last week, has preyed on Graf's mind all year, but the only time it seriously affected her on court was during the quarter-finals of the Italian Open when she was beaten by the 15-year-old Martina Hingis of Switzerland, whom she defeated here in Saturday's semi-final.

Graf missed the Australian Open this year through injury but has now won all the other three Grand Slams, defeating Spain's Arantxa Sanchez Vicario in both the French Open and Wimbledon.

Work, it has been said, is the most natural form of relaxation; this certainly appears to apply to the German. Graf served implacably, hitting 10 aces, two at 100mph and more.

"At every level she played a little bit better than me," said Seles. "Her serve was great while I really served some weak ones. She kept the pressure on the whole time. Steffi was hitting tons of winners from the corners."

"I played my best today," Graf said. "It seems pretty amazing what I've achieved already."

Tennis US Open

Sampras takes his title tally to eight

Stephen Bierley

PETE SAMPRAS stepped on court on Sunday as the US Open champion and left 1hr 58min later having retained his crown and his status as No 1 in the world with a 6-1, 6-4, 7-6 victory over his fellow American Michael Chang.

Chang had threatened both, although many would have found it exceptionally difficult to recognise him as the best player in the world if he had won his first US final here. The most feisty, perhaps, or the most determined. But not top of the tennis ladder. He needs one of them to play half his shots.

For Sampras this has not been the best of years, the death of his coach and close friend Tim Gullikson casting a deep shadow over every tournament he played in.

This was his last chance of a Grand Slam victory, something he has never failed to achieve since 1992. He now has eight to his name, four here, three at Wimbledon, and one Australian.

Nobody was quite certain what frame of mind he would be in here. Now we know. He struggled horribly against Jiri Novak of the Czech Republic in the second round and was brought to his knees in the quarter-finals by Spain's Alex Corretja, but he survived like the champion he is.

Goran Ivanisevic was polished off in quick time in Saturday's semi-finals, much as that other big server, Australia's Mark Philippoussis, had been given short shrift earlier in the second week.

And Sampras set about Chang as if he had a plane to catch. Chang was hardly able to hit a shot in during the first set as Sampras unleashed a steady stream of aces and winners.

Chang, like Sampras, almost went out of the tournament when fellow American Vince Spadea served for the match in the third round. The hottest prospect was undoubtedly Agassi, but Chang subdued him completely in Saturday's other semi-final.

Sampras finished off the first set with a blistering ace and when he immediately broke Chang's serve at the beginning of the second set the battle already appeared as good as finished. But it is not Chang's way to cave in, no matter how heavy the odds against him.

Back he came, taking the Sampras serve for the first time and building a 4-3 lead. But Sampras quickly re-imposed his imperious form to take the second set 6-4.

The third, almost inevitably, went to a tie-break although Sampras struggled to hold his serve at 5-6, saving a set point. The tie-break was by no means close, Sampras eventually winning 7-3.

His grief at Gullikson's untimely death was perhaps assuaged. But the memory will be constant.

Football Results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Aston Villa 2, Arsenal 2; Leeds 0, Manchester Utd 4; Liverpool 2, Southampton 1; Middlesbrough 4, Coventry 0; Nottingham Forest 0, Leicester City 0; Sheffield Wed 0, Chelsea 2; Sunderland 0, West Ham 0; Tottenham 1, Newcastle 2; Wimbledon 4, Everton 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Sheffield Wed (played 5, points 13); 2, Chelsea (5-11); 3, Liverpool (5-11)

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: First Division: Bradford 0, Norwich 2; Grimsby 2, Swindon 1; Ipswich 1, Huddersfield 3; Manchester City 1, Barnsley 2; Oldham 0, Sheffield Utd 2, Portsmouth 1, Port Vale 1; QPR 0, West Brom 2; Reading 2, Oxford Utd 0; Southend 5, Bolton 2; Stoke City 2, Crystal Palace 2; Tranmere 1, Birmingham 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Barnsley (4-12); 2, Norwich (5-12); 3, Stoke City (5-11)

Second Division: Blackpool 2, Walsall 1; Bournemouth 0, Crewe 1; Bristol City 2, Preston 1; Bury 3, Rotherham 1, Chesterfield 0, Brentford 2; Gillingham 1, Burnley 0, Millwall 2, Bristol R 0, Plymouth 0, Notts Co 0; Watford 1, Stockport 0, Wrexham 1, Peterborough 1; Wycombe 0, Luton 1; York 0, Shrewsbury 0 **Leading positions:** 1, Brentford (5-13); 2, Bury (5-13); 3, Plymouth (5-11)

Third Division: Barnet 1, Northampton 1, Brighton 3, Scarborough 2, Cambridge 2, Torquay 1, Cardiff 2, Exeter 1, Carlisle 4, Swansea 1; Chester 4, Lincoln 1; Doncaster 0, Mansfield 0, Fulham 3, Colchester 1, Hereford 0, Hartlepool 1, Hull 1, Rochdale 1, Leyton Orient 0, Darlington 0, Wigan 3, Scunthorpe [illegible] **Leading positions:** 1, Wigan (5-13); 2, Fulham (5-12); 3, Hartlepool (5-11)

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

First Division: [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

Second Division: [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

Third Division: [illegible] **Leading positions:** [illegible]

Cryptic crossword by Janus

Across

1 Lands one with cat-food (7)
5 Where intellect is needed to grasp Information Technology (7)
10 Fixed stake over volcano (4)
11 Unreasonable share in rail flotation (10)
12 Got to include one by this artist! (6)
13 Where planes may land to find bearings on voyage (3-5)
14 Short on capital for car accessory (9)
16 Departure from course conditions (5)
17 Deviation from the normal play (5)
19 Engages the attention of those standing to gain (9)
23 Inclination to write music (8)
24 Author having a go at verse (6)
26 Vandalised phone-boxes foreigners might be wise to shun (10)
27 Bring some back in vehicle (4)
28 Convenient opportunity to make garland secure (7)
29 Properties in Eastern countries (7)

Down

2 Window in the French upper room (7)
3 General allowance (5)
4 Where to come a cropper over oil (7)
6 Going round to the club perhaps (6)
7 Engine to show how tote works? (3-6)
8 One who might well take over first class in Latin? (7)
9 Equipment for divers about to engage in ablutions underground (9,4)
15 Guides for film-makers (9)
18 Go first or quietly draw back (7)
20 Lays bare former attitudes (7)
21 Row involving caterer (7)
22 Stout female's parent (6)
25 Run for late edition (5)

Last week's solution

INCONTESTABLE
INAMORATA ASPIC
LATER SANMARINO
ANIMIST HATCHET
DIGESTS GAROTTE
AMBULANCE SHOVE
LEAST INTEGRANT
REFRIGERATION